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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past . . ."

VOLUME VIII

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

PART TWO

Marcel Proust's continuous novel *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST) was originally published in eight parts, the titles and dates of which were: I. *Du Côté de Chez Swann* (1913); II. *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* (1918), awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1919; III. *Le Côté de Guermantes* I (1920); IV. *Le Côté de Guermantes* II, *Sodome et Gomorrhe* I (1921); V. *Sodome et Gomorrhe* II (1922); VI. *La Prisonnière* (1923); VII. *Albertine Disparue* (1925); VIII. *Le Temps Retrouvé* (1927).

Du Côté de Chez Swann has been published in English as SWANN'S WAY: *À l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs* as WITHIN A BUDDING GROVE: *Le Côté de Guermantes* as THE GUERMANTES WAY: *Sodome et Gomorrhe* as CITIES OF THE PLAIN: *La Prisonnière* as THE CAPTIVE: *Albertine Disparue* as THE SWEET CHEAT GONE: and *Le Temps Retrouvé* as TIME REGAINED. The first seven parts were translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff; the eighth by Stephen Hudson.

In the present uniform edition the volumes are as follows:—

VOL.

1. SWANN'S WAY. PART I
2. SWANN'S WAY. PART II
3. WITHIN A BUDDING GROVE. PART I
4. WITHIN A BUDDING GROVE. PART II
5. THE GUERMANTES WAY. PART I
6. THE GUERMANTES WAY. PART II
7. CITIES OF THE PLAIN. PART I
8. CITIES OF THE PLAIN. PART II
9. THE CAPTIVE. PART I
10. THE CAPTIVE. PART II
11. THE SWEET CHEAT GONE
12. TIME REGAINED

M. NISSIM BERNARD

MARCEL PROUST

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

PART TWO

Translated by

C. K. Scott Moncrieff

ILLUSTRATED BY

PHILIPPE JULLIAN

1960

CHATTO & WINDUS

LONDON

First published in English (cr. 8vo) 1929
First issued in the Phoenix Library 1936
First issued in the Uniform Edition
(12 vols.) 1941
Reprinted 1943, 1949, 1952 and 1956
Illustrated Edition 1957
Reprinted 1960

Printed in Great Britain
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CITIES OF THE PLAIN

CHAPTER II (*continued*)

The pleasures of M. Nissim Bernard (*continued*)—Outline of the strange character of Morel—M. de Charlus dines with the Verdurins.

WE were waiting, Albertine and I, at the Balbec station of the little local railway. We had driven there in the hotel omnibus, because it was raining. Not far away from us was M. Nissim Bernard, with a black eye. He had recently forsaken the chorister from *Athalie* for the waiter at a much frequented farmhouse in the neighbourhood, known as the "Cherry Orchard." This rubicund youth, with his blunt features, appeared for all the world to have a tomato instead of a head. A tomato exactly similar served as head to his twin brother. To the detached observer there is this attraction about these perfect resemblances between pairs of twins, that nature, becoming for the moment industrialised, seems to be offering a pattern for sale. Unfortunately M. Nissim Bernard looked at it from another point of view, and this resemblance was only external. Tomato II shewed a frenzied zeal in furnishing the pleasures exclusively of ladies, Tomato I did not mind condescending to meet the wishes of certain gentlemen. Now on each occasion when, stirred, as though by a reflex action, by the memory of pleasant hours spent with Tomato I, M. Bernard presented himself at the Cherry Orchard, being short-sighted (not that one need be short-sighted to mistake them), the old Israelite, unconsciously

playing Amphitryon, would accost the twin brother with: "Will you meet me somewhere this evening?" He at once received a resounding smack in the face. It might even be repeated in the course of a single meal, when he continued with the second brother the conversation he had begun with the first. In the end this treatment so disgusted him, by association of ideas, with tomatoes, even of the edible variety, that whenever he heard a newcomer order that vegetable, at the next table to his own, in the Grand Hotel, he would murmur to him: "You must excuse me, Sir, for addressing you, without an introduction. But I heard you order tomatoes. They are stale to-day. I tell you in your own interest, for it makes no difference to me, I never touch them myself." The stranger would reply with effusive thanks to this philanthropic and disinterested neighbour, call back the waiter, pretend to have changed his mind: "No, on second thoughts, certainly not, no tomatoes." Aimé, who had seen it all before, would laugh to himself, and think: "He's an old rascal, that Monsieur Bernard, he's gone and made another of them change his order." M. Bernard, as he waited for the already overdue tram, shewed no eagerness to speak to Albertine and myself, because of his black eye. We were even less eager to speak to him. It would however have been almost inevitable if, at that moment, a bicycle had not come dashing towards us; the lift-boy sprang from its saddle, breathless. Madame Verdurin had telephoned shortly after we left the hotel, to know whether I would dine with her two days later; we shall see presently why. Then, having given me the message in detail, the lift-boy left us, and, being one of these democratic "employees" who affect

independence with regard to the middle classes, and among themselves restore the principle of authority, explained: "I must be off, because of my chiefs."

Albertine's girl friends had gone, and would be away for some time. I was anxious to provide her with distractions. Even supposing that she might have found some happiness in spending the afternoons with no company but my own, at Balbec, I knew that such happiness is never complete, and that Albertine, being still at the age (which some of us never outgrow) when we have not yet discovered that this imperfection resides in the person who receives the happiness and not in the person who gives it, might have been tempted to put her disappointment down to myself. I preferred that she should impute it to circumstances which, arranged by myself, would not give us an opportunity of being alone together, while at the same time preventing her from remaining in the casino and on the beach without me. And so I had asked her that day to come with me to Doncières, where I was going to meet Saint-Loup. With a similar hope of occupying her mind, I advised her to take up painting, in which she had had lessons in the past. While working she would not ask herself whether she was happy or unhappy. I would gladly have taken her also to dine now and again with the Verdurins and the Cambremers, who certainly would have been delighted to see any friend introduced by myself, but I must first make certain that Mme. Putbus was not yet at la Raspelière. It was only by going there in person that I could make sure of this, and, as I knew beforehand that on the next day but one Albertine would be going on a visit with her aunt, I had seized this opportunity to send Mme. Verdurin a tele-

gram asking her whether she would be at home upon Wednesday. If Mme. Putbus was there, I would manage to see her maid, ascertain whether there was any danger of her coming to Balbec, and if so find out when, so as to take Albertine out of reach on the day. The little local railway, making a loop which did not exist at the time when I had taken it with my grandmother, now extended to Doncières-la-Goupil, a big station at which important trains stopped, among them the express by which I had come down to visit Saint-Loup, from Paris, and the corresponding express by which I had returned. And, because of the bad weather, the omnibus from the Grand Hotel took Albertine and myself to the station of the little tram, Balbec-Plage.

The little train had not yet arrived, but one could see, lazy and slow, the plume of smoke that it had left in its wake, which, confined now to its own power of locomotion as an almost stationary cloud, was slowly mounting the green slope of the cliff of Criquetot. Finally the little tram, which it had preceded by taking a vertical course, arrived in its turn, at a leisurely crawl. The passengers who were waiting to board it stepped back to make way for it, but without hurrying, knowing that they were dealing with a good-natured, almost human traveller, who, guided like the bicycle of a beginner, by the obliging signals of the station-master, in the strong hands of the engine-driver, was in no danger of running over anybody, and would come to a halt at the proper place.

My telegram explained the Verdurins' telephone message and had been all the more opportune since Wednesday (the day I had fixed happened to be a Wednesday) was the day set apart for dinner-parties by Mme. Ver-

durin, at la Raspelière, as in Paris, a fact of which I was unaware. Mme. Verdurin did not give "dinners," but she had "Wednesdays." These Wednesdays were works of art. While fully conscious that they had not their match anywhere, Mme. Verdurin introduced shades of distinction between them. "Last Wednesday was not as good as the one before," she would say. "But I believe the next will be one of the best I have ever given." Sometimes she went so far as to admit: "This Wednesday was not worthy of the others. But I have a big surprise for you next week." In the closing weeks of the Paris season, before leaving for the country, the Mistress would announce the end of the Wednesdays. It gave her an opportunity to stimulate the faithful. "There are only three more Wednesdays left, there are only two more," she would say, in the same tone as though the world were coming to an end. "You aren't going to miss next Wednesday, for the finale." But this finale was a sham, for she would announce: "Officially, there will be no more Wednesdays. To-day was the last for this year. But I shall be at home all the same on Wednesday. We shall have a little Wednesday to ourselves; I dare say these little private Wednesdays will be the nicest of all." At la Raspelière, the Wednesdays were of necessity restricted, and since, if they had discovered a friend who was passing that way, they would invite him for one or another evening, almost every day of the week became a Wednesday. "I don't remember all the guests, but I know there's Madame la Marquise de Camembert," the lift-boy had told me; his memory of our discussion of the name Cambremer had not succeeded in definitely supplanting that of the old word, whose syllables, familiar

and full of meaning, came to the young employee's rescue when he was embarrassed by this difficult name, and were immediately preferred and readopted by him, not by any means from laziness or as an old and ineradicable usage, but because of the need for logic and clarity which they satisfied.

We hastened in search of an empty carriage in which I could hold Albertine in my arms throughout the journey. Having failed to find one, we got into a compartment in which there was already installed a lady with a massive face, old and ugly, with a masculine expression, very much in her Sunday best, who was reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Notwithstanding her commonness, she was eclectic in her tastes, and I found amusement in asking myself to what social category she could belong; I at once concluded that she must be the manager of some large brothel, a procuress on holiday. Her face, her manner, proclaimed the fact aloud. Only, I had never yet supposed that such ladies read the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Albertine drew my attention to her with a wink and a smile. The lady wore an air of extreme dignity; and as I, for my part, bore within me the consciousness that I was invited, two days later, to the terminal point of the little railway, by the famous Mme. Verdurin, that at an intermediate station I was awaited by Robert de Saint-Loup, and that a little farther on I had it in my power to give great pleasure to Mme. de Cambremer, by going to stay at Féterne, my eyes sparkled with irony as I studied this self-important lady who seemed to think that, because of her elaborate attire, the feathers in her hat, her *Revue des Deux Mondes*, she was a more considerable personage than myself. I hoped that the lady

would not remain in the train much longer than M. Nissim Bernard, and that she would alight at least at Toutainville, but no. The train stopped at Epreville, she remained seated. Similarly at Montmartin-sur-Mer, at Parville-la-Bingard, at Incarville, so that in despair, when the train had left Saint-Frichoux, which was the last station before Doncières, I began to embrace Albertine without bothering about the lady. At Doncières, Saint-Loup had come to meet me at the station, with the greatest difficulty, he told me, for, as he was staying with his aunt, my telegram had only just reached him and he could not, having been unable to make any arrangements beforehand, spare me more than an hour of his time. This hour seemed to me, alas, far too long, for as soon as we had left the train Albertine devoted her whole attention to Saint-Loup. She never talked to me, barely answered me if I addressed her, repulsed me when I approached her. With Robert, on the other hand, she laughed her provoking laugh, talked to him volubly, played with the dog he had brought with him, and, as she excited the animal, deliberately rubbed against its master. I remembered that, on the day when Albertine had allowed me to kiss her for the first time, I had had a smile of gratitude for the unknown seducer who had wrought so profound a change in her and had so far simplified my task. I thought of him now with horror. Robert must have noticed that I was not unconcerned about Albertine, for he offered no response to her provocations, which made her extremely annoyed with myself; then he spoke to me as though I had been alone, which, when she realised it, raised me again in her esteem. Robert asked me if I would not like to meet those of his

friends with whom he used to make me dine every evening at Doncières, when I was staying there, who were still in the garrison. And as he himself adopted that irritating manner which he rebuked in others: "What is the good of your having worked so hard to *charm* them if you don't want to see them again?" I declined his offer, for I did not wish to run any risk of being parted from Albertine, but also because now I was detached from them. From them, which is to say from myself. We passionately long that there may be another life in which we shall be similar to what we are here below. But we do not pause to reflect that, even without waiting for that other life, in this life, after a few years we are unfaithful to what we have been, to what we wished to remain immortally. Even without supposing that death is to alter us more completely than the changes that occur in the course of a lifetime, if in that other life we were to encounter the self that we have been, we should turn away from ourself as from those people with whom we were once on friendly terms but whom we have not seen for years—such as Saint-Loup's friends whom I used so much to enjoy meeting again every evening at the Faisan Doré, and whose conversation would now have seemed to me merely a boring importunity. In this respect, and because I preferred not to go there in search of what had pleased me there in the past, a stroll through Doncières might have seemed to me a prefiguration of an arrival in Paradise. We dream much of Paradise, or rather of a number of successive Paradises, but each of them is, long before we die, a Paradise lost, in which we should feel ourself lost also.

He left us at the station. "But you may have about

an hour to wait," he told me. "If you spend it here, you will probably see my uncle Charlus, who is going by the train to Paris, ten minutes before yours. I have said good-bye to him already, because I have to go back before his train starts. I didn't tell him about you, because I hadn't got your telegram." To the reproaches which I heaped upon Albertine when Saint-Loup had left us, she replied that she had intended, by her coldness towards me, to destroy any idea that he might have formed if, at the moment when the train stopped, he had seen me leaning against her with my arm round her waist. He had indeed noticed this attitude (I had not caught sight of him, otherwise I should have adopted one that was more correct), and had had time to murmur in my ear: "So that's how it is, one of those priggish little girls you told me about, who wouldn't go near Mlle. de Stermaria because they thought her fast?" I had indeed mentioned to Robert, and in all sincerity, when I went down from Paris to visit him at Doncières, and when we were talking about our time at Balbec, that there was nothing to be had from Albertine, that she was the embodiment of virtue. And now that I had long since discovered for myself that this was false, I was even more anxious that Robert should believe it to be true. It would have been sufficient for me to tell Robert that I was in love with Albertine. He was one of those people who are capable of denying themselves a pleasure to spare their friend sufferings which they would feel even more keenly if they themselves were the victims. "Yes, she is still rather childish. But you don't know anything against her?" I added anxiously. "Nothing, except that I saw you clinging together like a pair of lovers."

"Your attitude destroyed absolutely nothing," I told Albertine when Saint-Loup had left us. "Quite true," she said to me, "it was stupid of me, I hurt your feelings, I'm far more unhappy about it than you are. You'll see, I shall never be like that again; forgive me," she pleaded, holding out her hand with a sorrowful air. At that moment, from the entrance to the waiting-room in which we were sitting, I saw advance slowly, followed at a respectful distance by a porter loaded with his baggage, M. de Charlus.

In Paris, where I encountered him only in evening dress, immobile, straitlaced in a black coat, maintained in a vertical posture by his proud aloofness, his thirst for admiration, the soar of his conversation, I had never realised how far he had aged. Now, in a light travelling suit which made him appear stouter, as he swaggered through the room, balancing a pursy stomach and an almost symbolical behind, the cruel light of day broke up into paint, upon his lips, rice-powder fixed by cold cream, on the tip of his nose, black upon his dyed moustaches whose ebon tint formed a contrast to his grizzled hair, all that by artificial light had seemed the animated colouring of a man who was still young.

While I stood talking to him, though briefly, because of his train, I kept my eye on Albertine's carriage to shew her that I was coming. When I turned my head towards M. de Charlus, he asked me to be so kind as to summon a soldier, a relative of his, who was standing on the other side of the platform, as though he were waiting to take our train, but in the opposite direction, away from Balbec. "He is in his regimental band," said M. de Charlus. "As you are so fortunate as to be still young

enough, and I unfortunately am old enough for you to save me the trouble of going across to him." I took it upon myself to go across to the soldier he pointed out to me, and saw from the lyres embroidered on his collar that he was a bandsman. But, just as I was preparing to execute my commission, what was my surprise, and, I may say, my pleasure, on recognising Morel, the son of my uncle's valet, who recalled to me so many memories. They made me forget to convey M. de Charlus's message. "What, you are at Doncières?" "Yes, and they've put me in the band attached to the batteries." But he made this answer in a dry and haughty tone. He had become an intense "poseur," and evidently the sight of myself, reminding him of his father's profession, was not pleasing to him. Suddenly I saw M. de Charlus descending upon us. My delay had evidently taxed his patience. "I should like to listen to a little music this evening," he said to Morel without any preliminaries, "I pay five hundred francs for the evening, which may perhaps be of interest to one of your friends, if you have any in the band." Knowing as I did the insolence of M. de Charlus, I was astonished at his not even saying how d'ye do to his young friend. The Baron did not however give me time to think. Holding out his hand in the friendliest manner: "Good-bye, my dear fellow," he said, as a hint that I might now leave them. I had, as it happened, left my dear Albertine too long alone. "D'you know," I said to her as I climbed into the carriage, "life by the sea-side, and travelling make me realise that the theatre of the world is stocked with fewer settings than actors, and with fewer actors than situations." "What makes you say that?" "Because M. de Charlus asked me just now to

fetch one of his friends, whom, this instant, on the platform of this station, I have just discovered to be one of my own." But as I uttered these words, I began to wonder how the Baron could have bridged the social gulf to which I had not given a thought. It occurred to me first of all that it might be through Jupien, whose niece, as the reader may remember, had seemed to shew a preference for the violinist. What did baffle me completely was that, when due to leave for Paris in five minutes, the Baron should have asked for a musical evening. But, visualising Jupien's niece again in my memory, I was beginning to find that "recognitions" did indeed play an important part in life, when all of a sudden the truth flashed across my mind and I realised that I had been absurdly innocent. M. de Charlus had never in his life set eyes upon Morel, nor Morel upon M. de Charlus, who, dazzled but also terrified by a warrior, albeit he bore no weapon but a lyre, had called upon me in his emotion to bring him the person whom he never suspected that I already knew. In any case, the offer of five hundred francs must have made up to Morel for the absence of any previous relations, for I saw that they continued to talk, without reflecting that they were standing close beside our tram. As I recalled the manner in which M. de Charlus had come up to Morel and myself, I saw at once the resemblance to certain of his relatives, when they picked up a woman in the street. Only the desired object had changed its sex. After a certain age, and even if different evolutions are occurring in us, the more we become ourself, the more our characteristic features are accentuated. For Nature, while harmoniously contributing the design of her tapestry, breaks the monotony of

the composition thanks to the variety of the intercepted forms. Besides, the arrogance with which M. de Charlus had accosted the violinist is relative, and depends upon the point of view one adopts. It would have been recognised by three out of four of the men in society who nodded their heads to him, not by the prefect of police who, a few years later, was to keep him under observation.

"The Paris train is signalled, Sir," said the porter who was carrying his luggage. "But I am not going by the train, put it in the cloakroom, damn you!" said M. de Charlus, as he gave twenty francs to the porter, astonished by the change of plan and charmed by the tip. This generosity at once attracted a flower-seller. "Buy these carnations, look, this lovely rose, kind gentlemen, it will bring you luck." M. de Charlus, out of patience, handed her a couple of francs, in exchange for which the woman gave him her blessing, and her flowers as well. "Good God, why can't she leave us alone," said M. de Charlus, addressing himself in an ironical and complaining tone, as of a man distraught, to Morel, to whom he found a certain comfort in appealing. "We've quite enough to talk about as it is." Perhaps the porter was not yet out of earshot, perhaps M. de Charlus did not care to have too numerous an audience, perhaps these incidental remarks enabled his lofty timidity not to approach too directly the request for an assignation. The musician, turning with a frank, imperative and decided air to the flower-seller, raised a hand which repulsed her and indicated to her that they did not want her flowers and that she was to get out of their way as quickly as possible. M. de Charlus observed with ecstasy this

authoritative, virile gesture, made by the graceful hand for which it ought still to have been too weighty, too massively brutal, with a precocious firmness and suppleness which gave to this still beardless adolescent the air of a young David capable of waging war against Goliath. The Baron's admiration was unconsciously blended with the smile with which we observe in a child an expression of gravity beyond his years. "This is a person whom I should like to accompany me on my travels and help me in my business. How he would simplify my life," M. de Charlus said to himself.

The train for Paris (which M. de Charlus did not take) started. Then we took our seats in our own train, Albertine and I, without my knowing what had become of M. de Charlus and Morel. "We must never quarrel any more, I beg your pardon again," Albertine repeated, alluding to the Saint-Loup incident. "We must always be nice to each other," she said tenderly. "As for your friend Saint-Loup, if you think that I am the least bit interested in him, you are quite mistaken. All that I like about him is that he seems so very fond of you." "He's a very good fellow," I said, taking care not to supply Robert with those imaginary excellences which I should not have failed to invent, out of friendship for himself, had I been with anybody but Albertine. "He's an excellent creature, frank, devoted, loyal, a person you can rely on to do anything." In saying this I confined myself, held in check by my jealousy, to telling the truth about Saint-Loup, but what I said was literally true. It found expression in precisely the same terms that Mme. de Villeparisis had employed in speaking to me of him, when I did not yet know him, imagined him to be so

different, so proud, and said to myself: "People think him good because he is a great gentleman." Just as when she had said to me: "He would be so pleased," I imagined, after seeing him outside the hotel, preparing to drive away, that his aunt's speech had been a mere social banality, intended to flatter me. And I had realised afterwards that she had said what she did sincerely, thinking of the things that interested me, of my reading, and because she knew that that was what Saint-Loup liked, as it was to be my turn to say sincerely to somebody who was writing a history of his ancestor La Rochefoucauld, the author of the *Maximes,* who wished to consult Robert about him: "He will be so pleased." It was simply that I had learned to know him. But, when I set eyes on him for the first time, I had not supposed that an intelligence akin to my own could be enveloped in so much outward elegance of dress and attitude. By his feathers I had judged him to be a bird of another species. It was Albertine now who, perhaps a little because Saint-Loup, in his kindness to myself, had been so cold to her, said to me what I had already thought: "Ah! He is as devoted as all that! I notice that people always find all the virtues in other people, when they belong to the Faubourg Saint-Germain." Now, that Saint-Loup belonged to the Faubourg Saint-Germain was a thing of which I had never once thought in the course of all these years in which, stripping himself of his prestige, he had displayed to me his virtues. A change in our perspective in looking at other people, more striking already in friendship than in merely social relations, but how much more striking still in love, where desire on so vast a scale increases to such proportions the slightest signs of coolness, that far

less than the coolness Saint-Loup had shewn me in the beginning had been enough to make me suppose at first that Albertine scorned me, imagine her friends to be creatures marvellously inhuman, and ascribe merely to the indulgence that people feel for beauty and for a certain elegance, Elstir's judgment when he said to me of the little band, with just the same sentiment as Mme. de Villeparisis speaking of Saint-Loup: "They are good girls." But this was not the opinion that I would instinctively have formed when I heard Albertine say: "In any case, whether he's devoted or not, I sincerely hope I shall never see him again, since he's made us quarrel. We must never quarrel again. It isn't nice." I felt, since she had seemed to desire Saint-Loup, almost cured for the time being of the idea that she cared for women, which I had supposed to be incurable. And, faced by Albertine's mackintosh in which she seemed to have become another person, the tireless vagrant of rainy days, and which, close-fitting, malleable and grey, seemed at that moment not so much intended to protect her garments from the rain as to have been soaked by it and to be clinging to my mistress's body as though to take the imprint of her form for a sculptor, I tore apart that tunic which jealously espoused a longed-for bosom and, drawing Albertine towards me: "But won't you, indolent traveller, dream upon my shoulder, resting your brow upon it?" I said, taking her head in my hands, and shewing her the wide meadows, flooded and silent, which extended in the gathering dusk to the horizon closed by the parallel openings of valleys far and blue.

Two days later, on the famous Wednesday, in that same little train, which I had again taken, at Balbec, to

go and dine at la Raspelière, I was taking care not to miss Cottard at Graincourt-Saint-Vast, where a second telephone message from Mme. Verdurin had told me that I should find him. He was to join my train and would tell me where we had to get out to pick up the carriages that would be sent from la Raspelière to the station. And so, as the little train barely stopped for a moment at Graincourt, the first station after Doncières, I was standing in readiness at the open window, so afraid was I of not seeing Cottard or of his not seeing me. Vain fears! I had not realised to what an extent the little clan had moulded all its regular members after the same type, so that they, being moreover in full evening dress, as they stood waiting upon the platform, let themselves be recognised immediately by a certain air of assurance, fashion and familiarity, by a look in their eyes which seemed to sweep, like an empty space in which there was nothing to arrest their attention, the serried ranks of the common herd, watched for the arrival of some fellow-member who had taken the train at an earlier station, and sparkled in anticipation of the talk that was to come. This sign of election, with which the habit of dining together had marked the members of the little group, was not all that distinguished them; when numerous, in full strength, they were massed together, forming a more brilliant patch in the midst of the troop of passengers—what Brichot called the *pecus*—upon whose dull countenances could be read no conception of what was meant by the name Verdurin, no hope of ever dining at la Raspelière. To be sure, these common travellers would have been less interested than myself had anyone quoted in their hearing—notwithstanding the notoriety that several of them had achieved

—the names of those of the faithful whom I was astonished to see continuing to dine out, when many of them had already been doing so, according to the stories that I had heard, before my birth, at a period at once so distant and so vague that I was inclined to exaggerate its remoteness. The contrast between the continuance not only of their existence, but of the fulness of their powers, and the annihilation of so many friends whom I had already seen, in one place or another, pass away, gave me the same sentiment that we feel when in the stop-press column of the newspapers we read the very announcement that we least expected, for instance that of an untimely death, which seems to us fortuitous because the causes that have led up to it have remained outside our knowledge. This is the feeling that death does not descend upon all men alike, but that a more oncoming wave of its tragic tide carries off a life placed at the same level as others which the waves that follow will long continue to spare. We shall see later on that the diversity of the forms of death that circulate invisibly is the cause of the peculiar unexpectedness presented, in the newspapers, by their obituary notices. Then I saw that, with the passage of time, not only do the real talents that may coexist with the most commonplace conversation reveal and impose themselves, but furthermore that mediocre persons arrive at those exalted positions, attached in the imagination of our childhood to certain famous elders, when it never occurred to us that, after a certain number of years, their disciples, become masters, would be famous also, and would inspire the respect and awe that once they felt. But if the names of the faithful were unknown to the *pecus*, their aspect still singled them out in its eyes.

Indeed in the train (when the coincidence of what one or another of them might have been doing during the day, assembled them all together), having to collect at a subsequent station only an isolated member, the carriage in which they were gathered, ticketed with the elbow of the sculptor Ski, flagged with Cottard's *Temps,* stood out in the distance like a special saloon, and rallied at the appointed station the tardy comrade. The only one who might, because of his semi-blindness, have missed these welcoming signals, was Brichot. But one of the party would always volunteer to keep a look-out for the blind man, and, as soon as his straw hat, his green umbrella and blue spectacles caught the eye, he would be gently but hastily guided towards the chosen compartment. So that it was inconceivable that one of the faithful, without exciting the gravest suspicions of his being "on the loose," or even of his not having come "by the train," should not pick up the others in the course of the journey. Sometimes the opposite process occurred: one of the faithful had been obliged to go some distance down the line during the afternoon and was obliged in consequence to make part of the journey alone before being joined by the group; but even when thus isolated, alone of his kind, he did not fail as a rule to produce a certain effect. The Future towards which he was travelling marked him out to the person on the seat opposite, who would say to himself: "That must be somebody," would discern, round the soft hat of Cottard or of the sculptor Ski, a vague aureole and would be only half-astonished when at the next station an elegant crowd, if it were their terminal point, greeted the faithful one at the carriage door and escorted him to one of the waiting carriages, all of them reverently

saluted by the factotum of Douville station, or, if it were an intermediate station, invaded the compartment. This was what was done, and with precipitation, for some of them had arrived late, just as the train which was already in the station was about to start, by the troop which Cottard led at a run towards the carriage in the window of which he had seen me signalling. Brichot, who was among these faithful, had become more faithful than ever in the course of these years which had diminished the assiduity of others. As his sight became steadily weaker, he had been obliged, even in Paris, to reduce more and more his working hours after dark. Besides he was out of sympathy with the modern Sorbonne, where ideas of scientific exactitude, after the German model, were beginning to prevail over humanism. He now confined himself exclusively to his lectures and to his duties as an examiner; and so had a great deal more time to devote to social pursuits. That is to say, to evenings at the Verdurins', or to those parties that now and again were offered to the Verdurins by one of the faithful, tremulous with emotion. It is true that on two occasions love had almost succeeded in achieving what his work could no longer do, in detaching Brichot from the little clan. But Mme. Verdurin, who kept her eyes open, and moreover, having acquired the habit in the interests of her salon, had come to take a disinterested pleasure in this sort of drama and execution, had immediately brought about a coolness between him and the dangerous person, being skilled in (as she expressed it) "putting things in order" and "applying the red hot iron to the wound." This she had found all the more easy in the case of one of the dangerous persons, who was simply Brichot's laundress,

and Mme. Verdurin, having the right of entry into the Professor's fifth floor rooms, crimson with rage, when she deigned to climb his stairs, had only had to shut the door in the wretched woman's face. "What!" the Mistress had said to Brichot, "a woman like myself does you the honour of calling upon you, and you receive a creature like that?" Brichot had never forgotten the service that Mme. Verdurin had rendered him by preventing his old age from foundering in the mire, and became more and more strongly attached to her, whereas, in contrast to this revival of affection and possibly because of it, the Mistress was beginning to be tired of a too docile follower, and of an obedience of which she could be certain beforehand. But Brichot derived from his intimacy with the Verdurins a distinction which set him apart from all his colleagues at the Sorbonne. They were dazzled by the accounts that he gave them of dinner-parties to which they would never be invited, by the mention made of him in the reviews, the exhibition of his portrait in the Salon, by some writer or painter of repute whose talent the occupants of the other chairs in the Faculty of Arts esteemed, but without any prospect of attracting his attention, not to mention the elegance of the mundane philosopher's attire, an elegance which they had mistaken at first for slackness until their colleague kindly explained to them that a tall hat is naturally laid on the floor, when one is paying a call, and is not the right thing for dinners in the country, however smart, where it should be replaced by a soft hat, which goes quite well with a dinner-jacket. For the first few moments after the little group had plunged into the carriage, I could not even speak to Cottard, for he was suffocated,

not so much by having run in order not to miss the train as by his astonishment at having caught it so exactly. He felt more than the joy inherent in success, almost the hilarity of an excellent joke. "Ah! That was a good one!" he said when he had recovered himself. "A minute later! 'Pon my soul, that's what they call arriving in the nick of time!" he added, with a wink intended not so much to inquire whether the expression were apt, for he was now overflowing with assurance, but to express his satisfaction. At length he was able to introduce me to the other members of the little clan. I was annoyed to see that they were almost all in the dress which in Paris is called smoking. I had forgotten that the Verdurins were beginning a timid evolution towards fashionable ways, retarded by the Dreyfus case, accelerated by the "new" music, an evolution which for that matter they denied, and continued to deny until it was complete, like those military objectives which a general does not announce until he has reached them, so as not to appear defeated if he fails. In addition to which, Society was quite prepared to go half way to meet them. It went so far as to regard them as people to whose house nobody in Society went but who were not in the least perturbed by the fact. The Verdurin salon was understood to be a Temple of Music. It was there, people assured you, that Vinteuil had found inspiration, encouragement. Now, even if Vinteuil's sonata remained wholly unappreciated, and almost unknown, his name, quoted as that of the greatest of modern composers, had an extraordinary effect. Moreover, certain young men of the Faubourg having decided that they ought to be more intellectual than the middle classes, there were three of them who

had studied music, and among these Vinteuil's Sonata enjoyed an enormous vogue. They would speak of it, on returning to their homes, to the intelligent mothers who had incited them to acquire culture. And, taking an interest in what interested their sons, at a concert these mothers would gaze with a certain respect at Mme. Verdurin in her front box, following the music in the printed score. So far, this social success latent in the Verdurins was revealed by two facts only. In the first place, Mme. Verdurin would say of the Principessa di Caprarola: "Ah! She is intelligent, she is a charming woman. What I cannot endure, are the imbeciles, the people who bore me, they drive me mad." Which would have made anybody at all perspicacious realise that the Principessa di Caprarola, a woman who moved in the highest society, had called upon Mme. Verdurin. She had even mentioned her name in the course of a visit of condolence which she had paid to Mme. Swann after the death of her husband, and had asked whether she knew them. "What name did you say?" Odette had asked, with a sudden wistfulness. "Verdurin? Oh, yes, of course," she had continued in a plaintive tone, "I don't know them, or rather, I know them without really knowing them, they are people I used to meet at people's houses, years ago, they are quite nice." When the Principessa di Caprarola had gone, Odette would fain have spoken the bare truth. But the immediate falsehood was not the fruit of her calculations, but the revelation of her fears, of her desires. She denied not what it would have been adroit to deny, but what she would have liked not to have happened, even if the other person was bound to hear an hour later that it was a fact. A little later she

had recovered her assurance, and would indeed anticipate questions by saying, so as not to appear to be afraid of them: "Mme. Verdurin, why, I used to know her terribly well!" with an affectation of humility, like a great lady who tells you that she has taken the tram. "There has been a great deal of talk about the Verdurins lately," said Mme. de Souvré. Odette, with the smiling disdain of a Duchess, replied: "Yes, I do seem to have heard a lot about them lately. Every now and then there are new people who arrive like that in society," without reflecting that she herself was among the newest. "The Principessa di Caprarola has dined there," Mme. de Souvré went on. "Ah!" replied Odette, accentuating her smile, "that does not surprise me. That sort of thing always begins with the Principessa di Caprarola, and then some one else follows suit, like Comtesse Molé." Odette, in saying this, appeared to be filled with a profound contempt for the two great ladies who made a habit of "house-warming" in recently established drawing-rooms. One felt from her tone that the implication was that she, Odette, was, like Mme. de Souvré, not the sort of person to let herself in for that sort of thing.

After the admission that Mme. Verdurin had made of the Principessa di Caprarola's intelligence, the second indication that the Verdurins were conscious of their future destiny was that (without, of course, their having formally requested it) they became most anxious that people should now come to dine with them in evening dress. M. Verdurin could now have been greeted without shame by his nephew, the one who was "in the cart."

Among those who entered my carriage at Graincourt was Saniette, who long ago had been expelled from the

Verdurins' by his relative Forcheville, but had since returned. His faults, from the social point of view, had originally been—notwithstanding his superior qualities—something like Cottard's, shyness, anxiety to please, fruitless attempts to succeed in doing so. But if the course of life, by making Cottard assume, if not at the Verdurins', where he had, because of the influence that past associations exert over us when we find ourselves in familiar surroundings, remained more or less the same, at least in his practice, in his hospital ward, at the Academy of Medicine, a shell of coldness, disdain, gravity, that became more accentuated while he rewarded his appreciative students with puns, had made a clean cut between the old Cottard and the new, the same defects had on the contrary become exaggerated in Saniette, the more he sought to correct them. Conscious that he was frequently boring, that people did not listen to him, instead of then slackening his pace as Cottard would have done, of forcing their attention by an air of authority, not only did he try by adopting a humorous tone to make them forgive the unduly serious turn of his conversation, he increased his pace, cleared the ground, used abbreviations in order to appear less long-winded, more familiar with the matters of which he spoke, and succeeded only, by making them unintelligible, in seeming interminable. His self-assurance was not like that of Cottard, freezing his patients, who, when other people praised his social graces, would reply: "He is a different man when he receives you in his consulting room, you with your face to the light, and he with his back to it, and those piercing eyes." It failed to create an effect, one felt that it was cloaking an excessive shyness, that the merest trifle would

be enough to dispel it. Saniette, whose friends had always told him that he was wanting in self-confidence, and who had indeed seen men whom he rightly considered greatly inferior to himself, attain with ease to the success that was denied to him, never began telling a story without smiling at its drollery, fearing lest a serious air might make his hearers underestimate the value of his wares. Sometimes, giving him credit for the comic element which he himself appeared to find in what he was about to say, people would do him the honour of a general silence. But the story would fall flat. A fellow-guest who was endowed with a kind heart would sometimes convey to Saniette the private, almost secret encouragement of a smile of approbation, making it reach him furtively, without attracting attention, as one passes a note from hand to hand. But nobody went so far as to assume the responsibility, to risk the glaring publicity of an honest laugh. Long after the story was ended and had fallen flat, Saniette, crestfallen, would remain smiling to himself, as though relishing in it and for himself the delectation which he pretended to find adequate and which the others had not felt. As for the sculptor Ski, so styled on account of the difficulty they found in pronouncing his Polish surname, and because he himself made an affectation, since he had begun to move in a certain social sphere, of not wishing to be confused with certain relatives, perfectly respectable but slightly boring and very numerous, he had, at forty-four and with no pretension to good looks, a sort of boyishness, a dreamy wistfulness which was the result of his having been, until the age of ten, the most charming prodigal imaginable, the darling of all the ladies. Mme. Verdurin maintained that he

was more of an artist than Elstir. Any resemblance that there may have been between them was, however, purely external. It was enough to make Elstir, who had met Ski once, feel for him the profound repulsion that is inspired in us less by the people who are our exact opposite than by those who resemble us in what is least good, in whom are displayed our worst qualities, the faults of which we have cured ourselves, who irritate by reminding us of how we may have appeared to certain other people before we became what we now are. But Mme. Verdurin thought that Ski had more temperament than Elstir because there was no art in which he had not a facility of expression, and she was convinced that he would have developed that facility into talent if he had not been so lazy. This seemed to the Mistress to be actually an additional gift, being the opposite of hard work which she regarded as the lot of people devoid of genius. Ski would paint anything you asked, on cuff-links or on the panels over doors. He sang with the voice of a composer, played from memory, giving the piano the effect of an orchestra, less by his virtuosity than by his vamped basses, which suggested the inability of the fingers to indicate that at a certain point the cornet entered, which, for that matter, he would imitate with his lips. Choosing his words when he spoke so as to convey an odd impression, just as he would pause before banging out a chord to say "Ping!" so as to let the brasses be heard, he was regarded as marvellously intelligent, but as a matter of fact his ideas could be boiled down to two or three, extremely limited. Bored with his reputation for whimsicality, he had set himself to shew that he was a practical, matter-of-fact person, whence a triumphant

affectation of false precision, of false common sense, aggravated by his having no memory and a fund of information that was always inaccurate. The movements of his head, neck, limbs, would have been graceful if he had been still nine years old, with golden curls, a wide lace collar and little boots of red leather. Having reached Graincourt station with Cottard and Brichot, with time to spare, he and Cottard had left Brichot in the waiting-room and had gone for a stroll. When Cottard proposed to turn back, Ski had replied: "But there is no hurry. It isn't the local train to-day, it's the departmental train." Delighted by the effect that this refinement of accuracy produced upon Cottard, he added, with reference to himself: "Yes, because Ski loves the arts, because he models in clay, people think he's not practical. Nobody knows this line better than I do." Nevertheless they had turned back towards the station when, all of a sudden, catching sight of the smoke of the approaching train, Cottard, with a wild shout, had exclaimed: "We shall have to put our best foot foremost." They did as a matter of fact arrive with not a moment to spare, the distinction between local and departmental trains having never existed save in the mind of Ski. "But isn't the Princess on the train?" came in ringing tones from Brichot, whose huge spectacles, resplendent as the reflectors that laryngologists attach to their foreheads to throw a light into the throats of their patients, seemed to have taken their life from the Professor's eyes, and, possibly because of the effort that he was making to adjust his sight to them, seemed themselves, even at the most trivial moments, to be gazing at themselves with a sustained attention and an extraordinary fixity. Brichot's malady, as it gradually deprived

him of his sight, had revealed to him the beauties of that sense, just as, frequently, we have to have made up our minds to part with some object, to make a present of it for instance, before we can study it, regret it, admire it. "No, no, the Princess went over to Maineville with some of Mme. Verdurin's guests who were taking the Paris train. It is within the bounds of possibility that Mme. Verdurin, who had some business at Saint-Mars, may be with her! In that case, she will be coming with us, and we shall all travel together, which will be delightful. We shall have to keep our eyes skinned at Maineville and see what we shall see! Oh, but that's nothing, you may say that we came very near to missing the bus. When I saw the train I was dumbfoundered. That's what is called arriving at the psychological moment. Can't you picture us missing the train, Mme. Verdurin seeing the carriages come back without us: Tableau!" added the doctor, who had not yet recovered from his emotion. "That would be a pretty good joke, wouldn't it? Now then, Brichot, what have you to say about our little escapade?" inquired the doctor with a note of pride. "Upon my soul," replied Brichot, "why, yes, if you had found the train gone, that would have been what the late Villemain used to call a wipe in the eye!" But I, distracted at first by these people who were strangers to me, was suddenly reminded of what Cottard had said to me in the ball-room of the little casino, and, just as though there were an invisible link uniting an organ to our visual memory, the vision of Albertine leaning her breasts against Andrée's caused my heart a terrible pain. This pain did not last: the idea of Albertine's having relations with women seemed no longer possible since the occasion,

forty-eight hours earlier, when the advances that my mistress had made to Saint-Loup had excited in me a fresh jealousy which had made me forget the old. I was simple enough to suppose that one taste of necessity excludes another. At Harambouville, as the tram was full, a farmer in a blue blouse who had only a third class ticket got into our compartment. The doctor, feeling that the Princess must not be allowed to travel with such a person, called a porter, shewed his card, describing him as medical officer to one of the big railway companies, and obliged the station-master to make the farmer get out. This incident so pained and alarmed Saniette's timid spirit that, as soon as he saw it beginning, fearing already lest, in view of the crowd of peasants on the platform, it should assume the proportions of a rising, he pretended to be suffering from a stomach-ache, and, so that he might not be accused of any share in the responsibility for the doctor's violence, wandered down the corridor, pretending to be looking for what Cottard called the "water." Failing to find one, he stood and gazed at the scenery from the other end of the "twister." "If this is your first appearance at Mme. Verdurin's, Sir," I was addressed by Brichot, anxious to shew off his talents before a newcomer, "you will find that there is no place where one feels more the 'amenities of life,' to quote one of the inventors of dilettantism, of pococurantism, of all sorts of words in -ism that are in fashion among our little snobbesses, I refer to M. le Prince de Talleyrand." For, when he spoke of these great noblemen of the past, he thought it clever and "in the period" to prefix a "M." to their titles, and said "M. le Duc de La Rochefoucauld," "M. le Cardinal de Retz," referring to these also as "That

struggle for lifer de Gondi," "that Boulangist de Marcillac." And he never failed to call Montesquieu, with a smile, when he referred to him: "Monsieur le Président Secondat de Montesquieu." An intelligent man of the world would have been irritated by a pedantry which reeked so of the lecture-room. But in the perfect manners of the man of the world when speaking of a Prince, there is a pedantry also, which betrays a different caste, that in which one prefixes "the Emperor" to the name "William" and addresses a Royal Highness in the third person. "Ah, now, that is a man," Brichot continued, still referring to "Monsieur le Prince de Talleyrand"— "to whom we take off our hats. He is an ancestor." "It is a charming house," Cottard told me, "you will find a little of everything, for Mme. Verdurin is not exclusive, great scholars like Brichot, the high nobility, such as the Princess Sherbatoff, a great Russian lady, a friend of the Grand Duchess Eudoxie, who even sees her alone at hours when no one else is admitted." As a matter of fact the Grand Duchess Eudoxie, not wishing Princess Sherbatoff, who for years past had been cut by everyone, to come to her house when there might be other people, allowed her to come only in the early morning, when Her Imperial Highness was not at home to any of those friends to whom it would have been as unpleasant to meet the Princess as it would have been awkward for the Princess to meet them. As, for the last three years, as soon as she came away, like a manicurist, from the Grand Duchess, Mme. Sherbatoff would go on to Mme. Verdurin, who had just awoken, and stuck to her for the rest of the day, one might say that the Princess's loyalty surpassed even that of Brichot, constant as he was at

those Wednesdays, both in Paris, where he had the pleasure of fancying himself a sort of Chateaubriand at l'Abbaye-aux-Bois, and in the country, where he saw himself becoming the equivalent of what might have been in the salon of Mme. de Châtelet the man whom he always named (with an erudite sarcasm and satisfaction): "M. de Voltaire."

Her want of friends had enabled Princess Sherbatoff to shew for some years past to the Verdurins a fidelity which made her more than an ordinary member of the "faithful," the type of faithfulness, the ideal which Mme. Verdurin had long thought unattainable and which now, in her later years, she at length found incarnate in this new feminine recruit. However keenly the Mistress might feel the pangs of jealousy, it was without precedent that the most assiduous of her faithful should not have "failed" her at least once. The most stay-at-home yielded to the temptation to travel; the most continent fell from virtue; the most robust might catch influenza, the idlest be caught for his month's soldiering, the most indifferent go to close the eyes of a dying mother. And it was in vain that Mme. Verdurin told them then, like the Roman Empress, that she was the sole general whom her legion must obey, like the Christ or the Kaiser that he who loved his father or mother more than her and was not prepared to leave them and follow her was not worthy of her, that instead of slacking in bed or letting themselves be made fools of by bad women they would do better to remain in her company, by her, their sole remedy and sole delight. But destiny which is sometimes pleased to brighten the closing years of a life that has passed the mortal span had made Mme. Verdurin meet the Princess

Sherbatoff. Out of touch with her family, an exile from her native land, knowing nobody but the Baroness Putbus and the Grand Duchess Eudoxie, to whose houses, because she herself had no desire to meet the friends of the former, and the latter no desire that her friends should meet the Princess, she went only in the early morning hours when Mme. Verdurin was still asleep, never once, so far as she could remember, having been confined to her room since she was twelve years old, when she had had the measles, having on the 31st of December replied to Mme. Verdurin who, afraid of being left alone, had asked her whether she would not "shake down" there for the night, in spite of its being New Year's Eve: "Why, what is there to prevent me, any day of the year? Besides, to-morrow is a day when one stays at home, and this is my home," living in a boarding-house, and moving from it whenever the Verdurins moved, accompanying them upon their holidays, the Princess had so completely exemplified to Mme. Verdurin the line of Vigny:

> Thou only didst appear that which one seeks always,

that the Lady President of the little circle, anxious to make sure of one of her "faithful" even after death, had made her promise that whichever of them survived the other should be buried by her side. Before strangers—among whom we must always reckon him to whom we lie most barefacedly because he is the person whose scorn we should most dread: ourself—Princess Sherbatoff took care to represent her only three friendships—with the Grand Duchess, the Verdurins, and the Baroness Putbus—as the only ones, not which cataclysms beyond her control had allowed to emerge from the destruction of

all the rest, but which a free choice had made her elect in preference to any other, and to which a certain love of solitude and simplicity had made her confine herself. "I see *nobody* else," she would say, insisting upon the inflexible character of what appeared to be rather a rule that one imposes upon oneself than a necessity to which one submits. She would add: "I visit only three houses," as a dramatist who fears that it may not run to a fourth announces that there will be only three performances of his play. Whether or not M. and Mme. Verdurin believed in the truth of this fiction, they had helped the Princess to instil it into the minds of the faithful. And they in turn were persuaded both that the Princess, among the thousands of invitations that were offered her, had chosen the Verdurins' alone, and that the Verdurins, courted in vain by all the higher aristocracy, had consented to make but a single exception, in favour of the Princess.

[In their eyes, the Princess, too far superior to her native element not to find it boring, among all the people whose society she might have enjoyed, found the Verdurins alone entertaining, while they, in return, deaf to the overtures with which they were bombarded by the entire aristocracy, had consented to make but a single exception, in favour of a great lady of more intelligence than the rest of her kind, the Princess Sherbatoff.]

The Princess was very rich; she engaged for every first night a large box, to which, with the assent of Mme. Verdurin, she invited the faithful and nobody else. People would point to this pale and enigmatic person who had grown old without turning white, turning red rather like certain sere and shrivelled hedgerow fruits. They

admired both her influence and her humility, for, having always with her an Academician, Brichot, a famous scientist, Cottard, the leading pianist of the day, at a later date M. de Charlus, she nevertheless made a point of securing the least prominent box in the theatre, remained in the background, paid no attention to the rest of the house, lived exclusively for the little group, who, shortly before the end of the performance, would withdraw in the wake of this strange sovereign, who was not without a certain timid, fascinating, faded beauty. But if Mme. Sherbatoff did not look at the audience, remained in shadow, it was to try to forget that there existed a living world which she passionately desired and was unable to know: the *côterie* in a box was to her what is to certain animals their almost corpselike immobility in the presence of danger. Nevertheless the thirst for novelty and for the curious which possesses people in society made them pay even more attention perhaps to this mysterious stranger than to the celebrities in the front boxes to whom everybody paid a visit. They imagined that she must be different from the people whom they knew, that a marvellous intellect combined with a discerning bounty retained round about her that little circle of eminent men. The Princess was compelled, if you spoke to her about anyone, or introduced anyone to her, to feign an intense coldness, in order to keep up the fiction of her horror of society. Nevertheless, with the support of Cottard or of Mme. Verdurin, several newcomers succeeded in making her acquaintance and such was her excitement at making a fresh acquaintance that she forgot the fable of her deliberate isolation, and went to the wildest extremes to please the newcomer. If he was entirely unimportant,

the rest would be astonished. "How strange that the Princess, who refuses to know anyone, should make an exception of such an uninteresting person." But these fertilising acquaintances were rare, and the Princess lived narrowly confined in the midst of the faithful.

Cottard said far more often: "I shall see him on Wednesday at the Verdurins'," than: "I shall see him on Tuesday at the Academy." He spoke, too, of the Wednesdays as of an engagement equally important and inevitable. But Cottard was one of those people, little sought-after, who make it as imperious a duty to respond to an invitation as if such invitations were orders, like a military or judicial summons. It required a call from a very important patient to make him "fail" the Verdurins on a Wednesday, the importance depending moreover rather upon the rank of the patient than upon the gravity of his complaint. For Cottard, excellent fellow as he was, would forego the delights of a Wednesday not for a workman who had had a stroke, but for a Minister's cold. Even then he would say to his wife: "Make my apologies to Mme. Verdurin. Tell her that I shall be coming later on. His Excellency might really have chosen some other day to catch cold." One Wednesday their old cook having opened a vein in her arm, Cottard, already in his dinner-jacket to go to the Verdurins', had shrugged his shoulders when his wife had timidly inquired whether he could not bandage the cut: "Of course I can't, Léontine," he had groaned; "can't you see I've got my white waistcoat on?" So as not to annoy her husband, Mme. Cottard had sent post haste for his chief dresser. He, to save time, had taken a cab, with the result that, his carriage entering the courtyard just as

Cottard's was emerging to take him to the Verdurins, five minutes had been wasted in backing to let one another pass. Mme. Cottard was worried that the dresser should see his master in evening dress. Cottard sat cursing the delay, from remorse perhaps, and started off in a villainous temper which it took all the Wednesday's pleasures to dispel.

If one of Cottard's patients were to ask him: "Do you ever see the Guermantes?" it was with the utmost sincerity that the Professor would reply: "Perhaps not actually the Guermantes, I can't be certain. But I meet all those people at the house of some friends of mine. You must, of course, have heard of the Verdurins. They know everybody. Besides, they certainly are not people who've come down in the world. They've got the goods, all right. It is generally estimated that Mme. Verdurin is worth thirty-five million. Gad, thirty-five million, that's a pretty figure. And so she doesn't make two bites at a cherry. You mentioned the Duchesse de Guermantes. Let me explain the difference. Mme. Verdurin is a great lady, the Duchesse de Guermantes is probably a nobody. You see the distinction, of course. In any case, whether the Guermantes go to Mme. Verdurin's or not, she entertains all the very best people, the d'Sherbatoffs, the d'Forchevilles, *e tutti quanti,* people of the highest flight, all the nobility of France and Navarre, with whom you would see me conversing as man to man. Of course, those sort of people are only too glad to meet the princes of science," he added, with a smile of fatuous conceit, brought to his lips by his proud satisfaction not so much that the expression formerly reserved for men like Potain and Charcot should now be applicable to

himself, as that he knew at last how to employ all these expressions that were authorised by custom, and, after a long course of study, had learned them by heart. And so, after mentioning to me Princess Sherbatoff as one of the people who went to Mme. Verdurin's, Cottard added with a wink : "That gives you an idea of the style of the house, if you see what I mean?" He meant that it was the very height of fashion. Now, to entertain a Russian lady who knew nobody but the Grand Duchess Eudoxie was not fashionable at all. But Princess Sherbatoff might not have known even her, it would in no way have diminished Cottard's estimate of the supreme elegance of the Verdurin salon or his joy at being invited there. The splendour that seems to us to invest the people whose houses we visit is no more intrinsic than that of kings and queens on the stage, in dressing whom it is useless for a producer to spend hundreds and thousands of francs in purchasing authentic costumes and real jewels, when a great designer will procure a far more sumptuous impression by focussing a ray of light on a doublet of coarse cloth studded with lumps of glass and on a cloak of paper. A man may have spent his life among the great ones of the earth, who to him have been merely boring relatives or tiresome acquaintances, because a familiarity engendered in the cradle had stripped them of all distinction in his eyes. The same man, on the other hand, need only have been led by some chance to mix with the most obscure people, for innumerable Cottards to be permanently dazzled by the ladies of title whose drawing-rooms they imagined as the centres of aristocratic elegance, ladies who were not even what Mme. de Villeparisis and her friends were (great ladies fallen from

their greatness, whom the aristocracy that had been brought up with them no longer visited); no, those whose friendship has been the pride of so many men, if these men were to publish their memoirs and to give the names of those women and of the other women who came to their parties, Mme. de Cambremer would be no more able than Mme. de Guermantes to identify them. But what of that! A Cottard has thus his Marquise, who is to him "the Baronne," as in Marivaux, the Baronne whose name is never mentioned, so much so that nobody supposes that she ever had a name. Cottard is all the more convinced that she embodies the aristocracy—which has never heard of the lady—in that, the more dubious titles are, the more prominently coronets are displayed upon wineglasses, silver, notepaper, luggage. Many Cottards who have supposed that they were living in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain have had their imagination perhaps more enchanted by feudal dreams than the men who did really live among Princes, just as with the small shopkeeper who, on Sundays, goes sometimes to look at "old time" buildings, it is sometimes from those buildings every stone of which is of our own time, the vaults of which have been, by the pupils of Viollet-le-Duc, painted blue and sprinkled with golden stars, that they derive the strongest sensation of the middle ages. "The Princess will be at Maineville. She will be coming with us. But I shall not introduce you to her at once. It will be better to leave that to Mme. Verdurin. Unless I find a loophole. Then you can rely on me to take the bull by the horns." "What were you saying?" asked Saniette, as he rejoined us, pretending to have gone out to take the air. "I was quoting to this

gentleman," said Brichot, "a saying, which you will remember, of the man who, to my mind, is the first of the *fins-de-siècle* (of the eighteenth century, that is), by name Charles Maurice, Abbé de Perigord. He began by promising to be an excellent journalist. But he made a bad end, by which I mean that he became a Minister! Life has these tragedies. A far from scrupulous politician to boot who, with the lofty contempt of a thoroughbred nobleman, did not hesitate to work in his time for the King of Prussia, there are no two ways about it, and died in the skin of a 'Left Centre.'"

At Saint-Pierre-des-Ifs we were joined by a glorious girl who, unfortunately, was not one of the little group. I could not tear my eyes from her magnolia skin, her dark eyes, her bold and admirable outlines. A moment later she wanted to open a window, for it was hot in the compartment, and not wishing to ask leave of everybody, as I alone was without a greatcoat, she said to me in a quick, cool, jocular voice: "Do you mind a little fresh air, Sir?" I would have liked to say to her: "Come with us to the Verdurins?" or "Give me your name and address." I answered: "No, fresh air doesn't bother me, Mademoiselle." Whereupon, without stirring from her seat: "Do your friends object to smoke?" and she lit a cigarette. At the third station she sprang from the carriage. Next day, I inquired of Albertine, who she could be. For, stupidly thinking that people could have but one sort of love, in my jealousy of Albertine's attitude towards Robert, I was reassured so far as other women were concerned. Albertine told me, I believe quite sincerely, that she did not know. "I should so much like

to see her again," I exclaimed. "Don't worry, one always sees people again," replied Albertine. In this particular instance, she was wrong; I never saw again, nor did I ever identify the pretty girl with the cigarette. We shall see, moreover, why, for a long time, I ceased to look for her. But I have not forgotten her. I find myself at times, when I think of her, seized by a wild longing. But these recurrences of desire oblige us to reflect that if we wish to rediscover these girls with the same pleasure we must also return to the year which has since been followed by ten others in the course of which her bloom has faded. We can sometimes find a person again, but we cannot abolish time. And so on until the unforeseen day, gloomy as a winter night, when we no longer seek for that girl, or for any other, when to find her would actually frighten us. For we no longer feel that we have sufficient attraction to appeal to her, or strength to love her. Not, of course, that we are, in the strict sense of the word, impotent. And as for loving, we should love her more than ever. But we feel that it is too big an undertaking for the little strength that we have left. Eternal rest has already fixed intervals which we can neither cross nor make our voice be heard across them. To set our foot on the right step is an achievement like not missing the perilous leap. To be seen in such a state by a girl we love, even if we have kept the features and all the golden locks of our youth! We can no longer undertake the strain of keeping pace with youth. All the worse if our carnal desire increases instead of failing! We procure for it a woman whom we need make no effort to attract, who will share our couch for one night only and whom we shall never see again.

"Still no news, I suppose, of the violinist," said Cottard. The event of the day in the little clan was, in fact, the failure of Mme. Verdurin's favourite violinist. Employed on military service near Doncières, he came three times a week to dine at la Raspelière, having a midnight pass. But two days ago, for the first time, the faithful had been unable to discover him on the tram. It was supposed that he had missed it. But albeit Mme. Verdurin had sent to meet the next tram, and so on until the last had arrived, the carriage had returned empty. "He's certain to have been shoved into the guard-room, there's no other explanation of his desertion. Gad! In soldiering, you know, with those fellows, it only needs a bad-tempered serjeant." "It will be all the more mortifying for Mme. Verdurin," said Brichot, "if he fails again this evening, because our kind hostess has invited to dinner for the first time the neighbours from whom she has taken la Raspelière, the Marquis and Marquise de Cambremer." "This evening, the Marquis and Marquise de Cambremer!" exclaimed Cottard. "But I knew absolutely nothing about it. Naturally, I knew like everybody else that they would be coming one day, but I had no idea that it was to be so soon. Sapristi!" he went on, turning to myself, "what did I tell you? The Princess Sherbatoff, the Marquis and Marquise de Cambremer." And, after repeating these names, lulling himself with their melody: "You see that we move in good company," he said to me. "However, as it's your first appearance, you'll be one of the crowd. It is going to be an exceptionally brilliant gathering." And, turning to Brichot, he went on: "The Mistress will be furious. It is time we appeared to lend her a hand." Ever since

Mme. Verdurin had been at la Raspelière she had pretended for the benefit of the faithful to be at once feeling and regretting the necessity of inviting her landlords for one evening. By so doing she would obtain better terms next year, she explained, and was inviting them for business reasons only. But she pretended to regard with such terror, to make such a bugbear of the idea of dining with people who did not belong to the little group that she kept putting off the evil day. The prospect did for that matter alarm her slightly for the reasons which she professed, albeit exaggerating them, if at the same time it enchanted her for reasons of snobbishness which she preferred to keep to herself. She was therefore partly sincere, she believed the little clan to be something so matchless throughout the world, one of those perfect wholes which it takes centuries of time to produce, that she trembled at the thought of seeing introduced into its midst these provincials, people ignorant of the *Ring* and the *Meistersinger*, who would be unable to play their part in the concert of conversation and were capable, by coming to Mme. Verdurin's, of ruining one of those famous Wednesdays, masterpieces of art incomparable and frail, like those Venetian glasses which one false note is enough to shatter. "Besides, they are bound to be absolutely *anti*, and militarists," M. Verdurin had said. "Oh, as for that, I don't mind, we've heard quite enough about all that business," had replied Mme. Verdurin, who, a sincere Dreyfusard, would nevertheless have been glad to discover a social counterpoise to the preponderant Dreyfusism of her salon. For, Dreyfusism was triumphant politically, but not socially. Labori, Reinach, Picquart, Zola were still, to people in society, more or less traitors,

who could only keep them aloof from the little nucleus. And so, after this incursion into politics, Mme. Verdurin was determined to return to the world of art. Besides were not Indy, Debussy, on the "wrong" side in the Case? "So far as the Case goes, we need only remember Brichot," she said (the Don being the only one of the faithful who had sided with the General Staff, which had greatly lowered him in the esteem of Madame Verdurin). "There is no need to be eternally discussing the Dreyfus Case. No, the fact of the matter is that the Cambremers bore me." As for the faithful, no less excited by their unconfessed desire to make the Cambremers' acquaintance than dupes of the affected reluctance which Mme. Verdurin said she felt to invite them, they returned, day after day, in conversation with her, to the base arguments with which she herself supported the invitation, tried to make them irresistible. "Make up your mind to it once and for all," Cottard repeated, "and you will have better terms for next year, they will pay the gardener, you will have the use of the meadow. That will be well worth a boring evening. I am thinking only of yourselves," he added, albeit his heart had leaped on one occasion, when, in Mme. Verdurin's carriage, he had met the carriage of the old Mme. de Cambremer and, what was more, he had been abased in the sight of the railwaymen when, at the station, he had found himself standing beside the Marquis. For their part, the Cambremers, living far too remote from the social movement ever to suspect that certain ladies of fashion were speaking with a certain consideration of Mme. Verdurin, imagined that she was a person who could know none but Bohemians, was perhaps not even legally married, and so far as people of birth

were concerned would never meet any but themselves. They had resigned themselves to the thought of dining with her only to be on good terms with a tenant who, they hoped, would return again for many seasons, especially after they had, in the previous month, learned that she had recently inherited all those millions. It was in silence and without any vulgar pleasantries that they prepared themselves for the fatal day. The faithful had given up hope of its ever coming, so often had Mme. Verdurin already fixed in their hearing a date that was invariably postponed. These false decisions were intended not merely to make a display of the boredom that she felt at the thought of this dinner-party, but to keep in suspense those members of the little group who were staying in the neighbourhood and were sometimes inclined to fail. Not that the Mistress guessed that the "great day" was as delightful a prospect to them as to herself, but in order that, having persuaded them that this dinner-party was to her the most terrible of social duties, she might make an appeal to their devotion. "You are not going to leave me all alone with those Chinese mandarins! We must assemble in full force to support the boredom. Naturally, we shan't be able to talk about any of the things in which we are interested. It will be a Wednesday spoiled, but what is one to do!"

"Indeed," Brichot explained to me, "I fancy that Mme. Verdurin, who is highly intelligent and takes infinite pains in the elaboration of her Wednesdays, was by no means anxious to see these bumpkins of ancient lineage but scanty brains. She could not bring herself to invite the dowager Marquise, but has resigned herself to having the son and daughter-in-law." "Ah! We are

to see the Marquise de Cambremer?" said Cottard with a smile into which he saw fit to introduce a leer of sentimentality, albeit he had no idea whether Mme. de Cambremer was good-looking or not. But the title Marquise suggested to him fantastic thoughts of gallantry. "Ah! I know her," said Ski, who had met her once when he was out with Mme. Verdurin. "Not in the biblical sense of the word, I trust," said the doctor, darting a sly glance through his eyeglass; this was one of his favourite pleasantries. "She is intelligent," Ski informed me. "Naturally," he went on, seeing that I said nothing, and dwelling with a smile upon each word, "she is intelligent and at the same time she is not, she lacks education, she is frivolous, but she has an instinct for beautiful things. She may say nothing, but she will never say anything silly. And besides, her colouring is charming. She would be an amusing person to paint," he added, half shutting his eyes, as though he saw her posing in front of him. As my opinion of her was quite the opposite of what Ski was expressing with so many fine shades, I observed merely that she was the sister of an extremely distinguished engineer, M. Legrandin. "There, you see, you are going to be introduced to a pretty woman," Brichot said to me, "and one never knows what may come of that. Cleopatra was not even a great lady, she was a little woman, the unconscious, terrible little woman of our Meilhac, and just think of the consequences, not only to that idiot Antony, but to the whole of the ancient world." "I have already been introduced to Mme. de Cambremer," I replied. "Ah! In that case, you will find yourself on familiar ground." "I shall be all the more delighted to meet her," I answered him, "because

she has promised me a book by the former curé of Combray about the place-names of this district, and I shall be able to remind her of her promise. I am interested in that priest, and also in etymologies." "Don't put any faith in the ones he gives," replied Brichot, "there is a copy of the book at la Raspelière, which I have glanced through, but without finding anything of any value; it is a mass of error. Let me give you an example. The word Bricq is found in a number of place-names in this neighbourhood. The worthy cleric had the distinctly odd idea that it comes from Briga, a height, a fortified place. He finds it already in the Celtic tribes, Latobriges, Nemetobriges, and so forth, and traces it down to such names as Briand, Brion, and so forth. To confine ourselves to the region in which we have the pleasure of your company at this moment, Bricquebose means the wood on the height, Bricqueville the habitation on the height, Bricquebec, where we shall be stopping presently before coming to Maineville, the height by the stream. Now there is not a word of truth in all this, for the simple reason that *bricq* is the old Norse word which means simply a bridge. Just as fleur, which Mme. de Cambremer's protégé takes infinite pains to connect, in one place with the Scandinavian words *floi, flo,* in another with the Irish word *ae* or *aer,* is, beyond any doubt, the *fjord* of the Danes, and means harbour. So too, the excellent priest thinks that the station of Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, which adjoins la Raspelière, means Saint-Martin-le-Vieux (*vetus*). It is unquestionable that the word *vieux* has played a great part in the toponymy of this region. *Vieux* comes as a rule from *vadum,* and means a passage, as at the place called les Vieux. It is what the

English call *ford* (Oxford, Hereford). But, in this particular instance, Vêtu is derived not from *vetus*, but from *vastus*, a place that is devastated and bare. You have, round about here, Sottevast, the *vast* of Setold, Brillevast, the *vast* of Berold. I am all the more certain of the curé's mistake, in that Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu was formerly called Saint-Mars du Gast and even Saint-Mars-de-Terregate. Now the *v* and the *g* in these words are the same letter. We say *dévaster*, but also *gâcher*. *Jâchères* and *gatines* (from the High German *wastinna*) have the same meaning: Terregate is therefore *terra vasta*. As for Saint-Mars, formerly (save the mark) Saint-Merd, it is Saint-Medardus, which appears variously as Saint-Médard, Saint-Mard, Saint-Marc, Cinq-Mars, and even Dammas. Nor must we forget that quite close to here, places bearing the name of Mars are proof simply of a pagan origin (the god Mars) which has remained alive in this country but which the holy man refuses to see. The high places dedicated to the gods are especially frequent, such as the mount of Jupiter (Jeumont). Your curé declines to admit this, but, on the other hand, wherever Christianity has left traces, they escape his notice. He has gone so far afield as to Loctudy, a barbarian name, according to him, whereas it is simply *Locus Sancti Tudeni*, nor has he in Sammarcoles divined *Sanctus Martialis*. Your curé," Brichot continued, seeing that I was interested, "derives the terminations *hon, home, holm*, from the word *holl* (*hullus*), a hill, whereas it comes from the Norse *holm*, an island, with which you are familiar in Stockholm, and which is so widespread throughout this district, la Houlme, Engohomme, Tahoume, Robehomme, Néhomme, Quetteholme,

and so forth." These names made me think of the day when Albertine had wished to go to Infreville-la-Bigot (from the name of two successive lords of the manor, Brichot told me), and had then suggested that we should dine together at Robehomme. As for Maineville, we were just coming to it. "Isn't Néhomme," I asked, "somewhere near Carquethuit and Clitourps?" "Precisely; Néhomme is the *holm*, the island or peninsula of the famous Viscount Nigel, whose name has survived also in Néville. The Carquethuit and Clitourps that you mention furnish Mme. de Cambremer's protégé with an occasion for further blunders. No doubt he has seen that *carque* is a church, the *Kirche* of the Germans. You will remember Querqueville, not to mention Dunkerque. For there we should do better to stop and consider the famous word *Dun*, which to the Celts meant high ground. And that you will find over the whole of France. Your abbé was hypnotised by Duneville, which recurs in the Eure-et-Loir; he would have found Châteaudun, Dun-le-Roi in the Cher, Duneau in the Sarthe, Dun in the Ariège, Dune-les-Places in the Nièvre, and many others. This word *Dun* leads him into a curious error with regard to Douville where we shall be alighting, and shall find Mme. Verdurin's comfortable carriages awaiting us. Douville, in Latin *donvilla*, says he. As a matter of fact, Douville does lie at the foot of high hills. Your curé, who knows everything, feels all the same that he has made a blunder. He has, indeed, found in an old cartulary, the name *Domvilla*. Whereupon he retracts; Douville, according to him, is a fief belonging to the Abbot, *Domino Abbati*, of Mont Saint-Michel. He is delighted with the discovery, which is distinctly odd when one thinks of the scandalous

life that, according to the Capitulary of Sainte-Claire sur Epte, was led at Mont Saint-Michel, though no more extraordinary than to picture the King of Denmark as suzerain of all this coast, where he encouraged the worship of Odin far more than that of Christ. On the other hand, the supposition that the *n* has been changed to *m* does not shock me, and requires less alteration than the perfectly correct Lyon, which also is derived from *Dun* (*Lugdunum*). But the fact is, the abbé is mistaken. Douville was never Donville, but Doville, *Eudonis villa,* the village of Eudes. Douville was formerly called Escalecliff, the steps up the cliff. About the year 1233, Eudes le Bouteiller, Lord of Escalecliff, set out for the Holy Land; on the eve of his departure he made over the church to the Abbey of Blanchelande. By an exchange of courtesies, the village took his name, whence we have Douville to-day. But I must add that toponymy, of which moreover I know little or nothing, is not an exact science; had we not this historical evidence, Douville might quite well come from Ouville, that is to say the Waters. The forms in *ai* (Aigues-Mortes), from *aqua,* are constantly changed to *eu* or *ou.* Now there were, quite close to Douville, certain famous springs, Carquethuit. You might suppose that the curé was only too ready to detect there a Christian origin, especially as this district seems to have been pretty hard to convert, since successive attempts were made by Saint Ursal, Saint Goffroi, Saint Barsanore, Saint Laurent of Brèvedent, who finally handed over the task to the monks of Beaubec. But as regards *thuit* the writer is mistaken, he sees in it a form of *toft,* a building, as in Cricquetot, Ectot, Yvetot, whereas it is the *thveit,* the clearing, the reclaimed land,

as in Braquetuit, le Thuit, Regnetuit, and so forth. Similarly, if he recognises in Clitourps the Norman *thorp* which means village, he insists that the first syllable of the word must come from *clivus*, a slope, whereas it comes from *cliff*, a precipice. But his biggest blunders are due not so much to his ignorance as to his prejudices. However loyal a Frenchman one is, there is no need to fly in the face of the evidence and take Saint-Laurent en Bray to be the Roman priest, so famous at one time, when he is actually Saint Lawrence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin. But even more than his patriotic sentiments, your friend's religious bigotry leads him into strange errors. Thus you have not far from our hosts at la Raspelière two places called Montmartin, Montmartin-sur-Mer and Montmartin-en-Graignes. In the case of Graignes, the good curé has been quite right, he has seen that Graignes, in Latin *Grania*, in Greek *Krene*, means ponds, marshes; how many instances of Cresmays, Croen, Gremeville, Lengronne, might we not adduce? But, when he comes to Montmartin, your self-styled linguist positively insists that these must be parishes dedicated to Saint Martin. He bases his opinion upon the fact that the Saint is their patron, but does not realise that he was only adopted subsequently; or rather he is blinded by his hatred of paganism; he refuses to see that we should say Mont-Saint-Martin as we say Mont-Saint-Michel, if it were a question of Saint Martin, whereas the name Montmartin refers in a far more pagan fashion to temples consecrated to the god Mars, temples of which, it is true, no other vestige remains, but which the undisputed existence in the neighbourhood of vast Roman camps would render highly probable even without the

name Montmartin, which removes all doubt. You see that the little pamphlet which you will find at la Raspelière is far from perfect." I protested that at Combray the curé had often told us interesting etymologies. "He was probably better on his own ground, the move to Normandy must have made him lose his bearings." "Nor did it do him any good," I added, "for he came here with neurasthenia and went away again with rheumatism." "Ah, his neurasthenia is to blame. He has lapsed from neurasthenia to philology, as my worthy master Pocquelin would have said. Tell us, Cottard, do you suppose that neurasthenia can have a disturbing effect on philology, philology a soothing effect on neurasthenia and the relief from neurasthenia lead to rheumatism?" "Undoubtedly, rheumatism and neurasthenia are subordinate forms of neuro-arthritism. You may pass from one to the other by metastasis." "The eminent Professor," said Brichot, "expresses himself in a French as highly infused with Latin and Greek as M. Purgon himself, of Molièresque memory! My uncle, I refer to our national Sarcey. . . ." But he was prevented from finishing his sentence. The Professor had leaped from his seat with a wild shout: "The devil!" he exclaimed on regaining his power of articulate speech, "we have passed Maineville (d'you hear?) and Renneville too." He had just noticed that the train was stopping at Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, where most of the passengers alighted. "They can't have run through without stopping. We must have failed to notice it while we were talking about the Cambremers. Listen to me, Ski, pay attention, I am going to tell you 'a good one,'" said Cottard, who had taken a fancy to this expression, in

common use in certain medical circles. "The Princess must be on the train, she can't have seen us, and will have got into another compartment. Come along and find her. Let's hope this won't land us in trouble!" And he led us all off in search of Princess Sherbatoff. He found her in the corner of an empty compartment, reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. She had long ago, from fear of rebuffs, acquired the habit of keeping in her place, or remaining in her corner, in life as on the train, and of not offering her hand until the other person had greeted her. She went on reading as the faithful trooped into her carriage. I recognised her immediately; this woman who might have forfeited her position but was nevertheless of exalted birth, who in any event was the pearl of a salon such as the Verdurins', was the lady whom, on the same train, I had put down, two days earlier, as possibly the keeper of a brothel. Her social personality, which had been so vague, became clear to me as soon as I learned her name, just as when, after racking our brains over a puzzle, we at length hit upon the word which clears up all the obscurity, and which, in the case of a person, is his name. To discover two days later who the person is with whom one has travelled in the train is a far more amusing surprise than to read in the next number of a magazine the clue to the problem set in the previous number. Big restaurants, casinos, local trains, are the family portrait galleries of these social enigmas. "Princess, we must have missed you at Maineville! May we come and sit in your compartment?" "Why, of course," said the Princess who, upon hearing Cottard address her, but only then, raised from her magazine a pair of eyes which, like the eyes of M. de Charlus, although gentler,

saw perfectly well the people of whose presence she pretended to be unaware. Cottard, coming to the conclusion that the fact of my having been invited to meet the Cambremers was a sufficient recommendation, decided, after a momentary hesitation, to introduce me to the Princess, who bowed with great courtesy but appeared to be hearing my name for the first time. "Cré nom!" cried the doctor, "my wife has forgotten to make them change the buttons on my white waistcoat. Ah! Those women, they never remember anything. Don't you ever marry, my boy," he said to me. And as this was one of the pleasantries which he considered appropriate when he had nothing else to say, he peeped out of the corner of his eye at the Princess and the rest of the faithful, who, because he was a Professor and an Academician, smiled back, admiring his good temper and freedom from pride. The Princess informed us that the young violinist had been found. He had been confined to bed the evening before by a sick headache, but was coming that evening and bringing with him a friend of his father whom he had met at Doncières. She had learned this from Mme. Verdurin with whom she had taken luncheon that morning, she told us in a rapid voice, rolling her *r*s, with her Russian accent, softly at the back of her throat, as though they were not *r*s but *l*s. "Ah! You had luncheon with her this morning," Cottard said to the Princess; but turned his eyes to myself, the purport of this remark being to shew me on what intimate terms the Princess was with the Mistress. "You are indeed a faithful adherent!" "Yes, I love the little cirlcle, so intelligent, so agleeable, neverl spiteful, quite simple, not at all snobbish, and clevel to theirl fingle-tips." "Nom

d'une pipe! I must have lost my ticket, I can't find it anywhere," cried Cottard, with an agitation that was, in the circumstances, quite unjustified. He knew that at Douville, where a couple of landaus would be awaiting us, the collector would let him pass without a ticket, and would only bare his head all the more humbly, so that the salute might furnish an explanation of his indulgence, to wit that he had of course recognised Cottard as one of the Verdurins' regular guests. "They won't shove me in the lock-up for that," the doctor concluded. "You were saying, Sir," I inquired of Brichot, "that there used to be some famous waters near here; how do we know that?" "The name of the next station is one of a multitude of proofs. It is called Fervaches." "I don't undlestand what he's talking about," mumbled the Princess, as though she were saying to me out of politeness: "He's rather a bore, ain't he?" "Why, Princess, Fervaches means hot springs. *Fervidae aquae.* But to return to the young violinist," Brichot went on, "I was quite forgetting, Cottard, to tell you the great news. Had you heard that our poor friend Dechambre, who used to be Mme. Verdurin's favourite pianist, has just died? It is terribly sad." "He was quite young," replied Cottard, "but he must have had some trouble with his liver, there must have been something sadly wrong in that quarter, he had been looking very queer indeed for a long time past." "But he was not so young as all that," said Brichot; "in the days when Elstir and Swann used to come to Mme. Verdurin's, Dechambre had already made himself a reputation in Paris, and, what is remarkable, without having first received the baptism of success abroad. Ah! He was no follower of the Gospel accord-

ing to Saint Barnum, that fellow." "You are mistaken, he could not have been going to Mme. Verdurin's, at that time, he was still in the nursery." "But, unless my old memory plays me false, I was under the impression that Dechambre used to play Vinteuil's sonata for Swann, when that clubman, who had broken with the aristocracy, had still no idea that he was one day to become the embourgeoised Prince Consort of our national Odette." "It is impossible, Vinteuil's sonata was played at Mme. Verdurin's long after Swann ceased to come there," said the doctor, who, like all people who work hard and think that they remember many things which they imagine to be of use to them, forget many others, a condition which enables them to go into ecstasies over the memories of people who have nothing else to do. "You are hopelessly muddled, though your brain is as sound as ever," said the doctor with a smile. Brichot admitted that he was mistaken. The train stopped. We were at la Sogne. The name stirred my curiosity. "How I should like to know what all these names mean," I said to Cottard. "You must ask M. Brichot, he may know, perhaps." "Why, la Sogne is la Cicogne, *Siconia,*" replied Brichot, whom I was burning to interrogate about many other names.

Forgetting her attachment to her "corner," Mme. Sherbatoff kindly offered to change places with me, so that I might talk more easily with Brichot, whom I wanted to ask about other etymologies that interested me, and assured me that she did not mind in the least whether she travelled with her face or her back to the engine, standing, or seated, or anyhow. She remained on the defensive until she had discovered a newcomer's intentions, but as

THE "LITTLE CLAN" EN ROUTE
TO THE VERDURINS

soon as she had realised that these were friendly, she would do everything in her power to oblige. At length the train stopped at the station of Douville-Féterne, which being more or less equidistant from the villages of Féterne and Douville, bore for this reason their hyphenated name. "Saperlipopette!" exclaimed Doctor Cottard, when we came to the barrier where the tickets were collected, and, pretending to have only just discovered his loss, "I can't find my ticket, I must have lost it." But the collector, taking off his cap, assured him that it did not matter and smiled respectfully. The Princess (giving instructions to the coachman, as though she were a sort of lady in waiting to Mme. Verdurin, who, because of the Cambremers, had not been able to come to the station, as, for that matter, she rarely did) took me, and also Brichot, with herself in one of the carriages. The doctor, Saniette and Ski got into the other.

The driver, although quite young, was the Verdurins' head coachman, the only one who had any right to the title; he took them, in the daytime, on all their excursions, for he knew all the roads, and in the evening went down to meet the faithful and took them back to the station later on. He was accompanied by extra helpers (whom he selected if necessary). He was an excellent fellow, sober and capable, but with one of those melancholy faces on which a fixed stare indicates that the merest trifle will make the person fly into a passion, not to say nourish dark thoughts. But at the moment he was quite happy, for he had managed to secure a place for his brother, another excellent type of fellow, with the Verdurins. We began by driving through Douville. Grassy knolls ran down from the village to the sea, in wide slopes

to which their saturation in moisture and salt gave a richness, a softness, a vivacity of extreme tones. The islands and indentations of Rivebelle, far nearer now than at Balbec, gave this part of the coast the appearance, novel to me, of a relief map. We passed by some little bungalows, almost all of which were let to painters; turned into a track upon which some loose cattle, as frightened as were our horses, barred our way for ten minutes, and emerged upon the cliff road. "But, by the immortal gods," Brichot suddenly asked, "let us return to that poor Dechambre; do you suppose Mme. Verdurin *knows?* Has anyone *told* her?" Mme. Verdurin, like most people who move in society, simply because she needed the society of other people, never thought of them again for a single day, as soon as, being dead, they could no longer come to the Wednesdays, nor to the Saturdays, nor drop in for dinner. And one could not say of the little clan, a type in this respect of all salons, that it was composed of more dead than living members, seeing that, as soon as one was dead, it was as though one had never existed. But, to escape the nuisance of having to speak of the deceased, in other words to postpone one of the dinners—a thing impossible to the mistress—as a token of mourning, M. Verdurin used to pretend that the death of the faithful had such an effect on his wife that, in the interest of her health, it must never be mentioned to her. Moreover, and perhaps just because the death of other people seemed to him so conclusive, so vulgar an accident, the thought of his own death filled him with horror and he shunned any consideration that might lead to it. As for Brichot, since he was the soul of honesty and completely taken in by what M. Verdurin said about his wife, he

dreaded for his friend's sake the emotions that such a bereavement must cause her. "Yes, she *knew the worst* this morning," said the Princess, "it was impossible to *keep it from her.*" "Ah! Thousand thunders of Zeus!" cried Brichot, "Ah! it must have been a terrible blow, a friend of twenty-five years standing. There was a man who was one of us." Of course, of course, what can you expect? Such incidents are bound to be painful; but Madame Verdurin is a brave woman, she is even more cerebral than emotive." "I don't altogether agree with the Doctor," said the Princess, whose rapid speech, her murmured accents, certainly made her appear both sullen and rebellious. "Mme. Verdurin, beneath a cold exterior, conceals treasures of sensibility. M. Verdurin told me that he had had great difficulty in preventing her from going to Paris for the funeral; he was obliged to let her think that it was all to be held in the country." "The devil! She wanted to go to Paris, did she? Of course, I know that she has a heart, too much heart perhaps. Poor Dechambre! As Madame Verdurin remarked not two months ago: 'Compared with him, Planté, Paderewski, Risler himself are nowhere!' Ah, he could say with better reason than that limelighter Nero, who has managed to take in even German scholarship: *Qualis artifex pereo!* But he at least, Dechambre, must have died in the fulfilment of his priesthood, in the odour of Beethovenian devotion; and gallantly, I have no doubt; he had every right, that interpreter of German music, to pass away while celebrating the Mass in D. But he was, when all is said, the man to greet the unseen with a cheer, for that inspired performer would produce at times from

the Parisianised Champagne stock of which he came, the swagger and smartness of a guardsman."

From the height we had now reached, the sea suggested no longer, as at Balbec, the undulations of swelling mountains, but on the contrary the view, beheld from a mountain-top or from a road winding round its flank, of a blue-green glacier or a glittering plain, situated at a lower level. The lines of the currents seemed to be fixed upon its surface, and to have traced there for ever their concentric circles; the enamelled face of the sea which changed imperceptibly in colour, assumed towards the head of the bay, where an estuary opened, the blue whiteness of milk, in which little black boats that did not move seemed entangled like flies. I felt that from nowhere could one discover a vaster prospect. But at each turn in the road a fresh expanse was added to it and when we arrived at the Douville toll-house, the spur of the cliff which until then had concealed from us half the bay, withdrew, and all of a sudden I descried upon my left a gulf as profound as that which I had already had before me, but one that changed the proportions of the other and doubled its beauty. The air at this lofty point acquired a keenness and purity that intoxicated me. I adored the Verdurins; that they should have sent a carriage for us seemed to me a touching act of kindness. I should have liked to kiss the Princess. I told her that I had never seen anything so beautiful. She professed that she too loved this spot more than any other. But I could see that to her as to the Verdurins the thing that really mattered was not to gaze at the view like tourists, but to partake of good meals there, to entertain people whom they liked, to write letters, to read books, in short

to live in these surroundings, passively allowing the beauty of the scene to soak into them rather than making it the object of their attention.

After the toll-house, where the carriage had stopped for a moment at such a height above the sea that, as from a mountain-top, the sight of the blue gulf beneath almost made one dizzy, I opened the window; the sound, distinctly caught, of each wave that broke in turn had something sublime in its softness and precision. Was it not like an index of measurement which, upsetting all our ordinary impressions, shews us that vertical distances may be coordinated with horizontal, in contradiction of the idea that our mind generally forms of them; and that, though they bring the sky nearer to us in this way, they are not great; that they are indeed less great for a sound which traverses them as did the sound of those little waves, the medium through which it has to pass being purer. And in fact if one went back but a couple of yards below the toll-house, one could no longer distinguish that sound of waves, which six hundred feet of cliff had not robbed of its delicate, minute and soft precision. I said to myself that my grandmother would have listened to it with the delight that she felt in all manifestations of nature or art, in the simplicity of which one discerns grandeur. I was now at the highest pitch of exaltation, which raised everything round about me accordingly. It melted my heart that the Verdurins should have sent to meet us at the station. I said as much to the Princess, who seemed to think that I was greatly exaggerating so simple an act of courtesy. I know that she admitted subsequently to Cottard that she found me very enthusiastic; he replied that I was too emotional, required sedatives

and ought to take to knitting. I pointed out to the Princess every tree, every little house smothered in its mantle of roses, I made her admire everything, I would have liked to take her in my arms and press her to my heart. She told me that she could see that I had a gift for painting, that of course I must sketch, that she was surprised that nobody had told her about it. And she confessed that the country was indeed picturesque. We drove through, where it perched upon its height, the little village of Englesqueville (*Engleberti villa,* Brichot informed us). "But are you quite sure that there will be a party this evening, in spite of Dechambre's death, Princess?" he went on, without stopping to think that the presence at the station of the carriage in which we were sitting was in itself an answer to his question. "Yes," said the Princess, "M. Verldulin insisted that it should not be put off, simply to keep his wife from *thinking.* And besides, after never failing for all these years to entertain on Wednesdays, such a change in her habits would have been bound to upset her. Her nerves are velly bad just now. M. Verdurin was particularly pleased that you were coming to dine this evening, because he knew that it would be a great distraction for Mme. Verdurin," said the Princess, forgetting her pretence of having never heard my name before. "I think that it will be as well not to say *anything* in front of Mme. Verdurin," the Princess added. "Ah! I am glad you warned me," Brichot artlessly replied. "I shall pass on your suggestion to Cottard." The carriage stopped for a moment. It moved on again, but the sound that the wheels had been making in the village street had ceased. We had turned into the main avenue of la

Raspelière where M. Verdurin stood waiting for us upon the steps. "I did well to put on a dinner-jacket," he said, observing with pleasure that the faithful had put on theirs, "since I have such smart gentlemen in my party." And as I apologised for not having changed: "Why, that's quite all right. We're all friends here. I should be delighted to offer you one of my own dinner-jackets, but it wouldn't fit you." The handclasp throbbing with emotion which, as he entered the hall of la Raspelière, and by way of condolence at the death of the pianist, Brichot gave our host elicited no response from the latter. I told him how greatly I admired the scenery. "Ah! All the better, and you've seen nothing, we must take you round. Why not come and spend a week or two here, the air is excellent." Brichot was afraid that his handclasp had not been understood. "Ah! Poor Dechambre!" he said, but in an undertone, in case Mme. Verdurin was within earshot. "It is terrible," replied M. Verdurin lightly. "So young," Brichot pursued the point. Annoyed at being detained over these futilities, M. Verdurin replied in a hasty tone and with an embittered groan, not of grief but of irritated impatience: "Why yes, of course, but what's to be done about it, it's no use crying over spilt milk, talking about him won't bring him back to life, will it?" And, his civility returning with his joviality: "Come along, my good Brichot, get your things off quickly. We have a bouillabaisse which mustn't be kept waiting. But, in heaven's name, don't start talking about Dechambre to Madame Verdurin. You know that she always hides her feelings, but she is quite morbidly sensitive. I give you my word, when she heard that Dechambre was dead, she

almost cried," said M. Verdurin in a tone of profound irony. One might have concluded, from hearing him speak, that it implied a form of insanity to regret the death of a friend of thirty years' standing, and on the other hand one gathered that the perpetual union of M. Verdurin and his wife did not preclude his constantly criticising her and her frequently irritating him. "If you mention it to her, she will go and make herself ill again. It is deplorable, three weeks after her bronchitis. When that happens, it is I who have to be sicknurse. You can understand that I have had more than enough of it. Grieve for Dechambre's fate in your heart as much as you like. Think of him, but do not speak about him. I was very fond of Dechambre, but you cannot blame me for being fonder still of my wife. Here's Cottard, now, you can ask him." And indeed he knew that a family doctor can do many little services, such as prescribing that one must not give way to grief.

The docile Cottard had said to the Mistress: "Upset yourself like that, and to-morrow you will *give me* a temperature of 102," as he might have said to the cook: "To-morrow you will give me a *riz de veau*." Medicine, when it fails to cure the sick, busies itself with changing the sense of verbs and pronouns.

M. Verdurin was glad to find that Saniette, notwithstanding the snubs that he had had to endure two days earlier, had not deserted the little nucleus. And indeed Mme. Verdurin and her husband had acquired, in their idleness, cruel instincts for which the great occasions, occurring too rarely, no longer sufficed. They had succeeded in effecting a breach between Odette and Swann, between Brichot and his mistress. They would try it

again with some one else, that was understood. But the opportunity did not present itself every day. Whereas, thanks to his shuddering sensibility, his timorous and quickly aroused shyness, Saniette provided them with a whipping-block for every day in the year. And so, for fear of his failing them, they took care always to invite him with friendly and persuasive words, such as the bigger boys at school, the old soldiers in a regiment address to a recruit whom they are anxious to beguile so that they may get him into their clutches, with the sole object of flattering him for the moment and bullying him when he can no longer escape. "Whatever you do," Brichot reminded Cottard, who had not heard what M. Verdurin was saying, "mum's the word before Mme. Verdurin. Have no fear, O Cottard, you are dealing with a sage, as Theocritus says. Besides, M. Verdurin is right, what is the use of lamentations," he went on, for, being capable of assimilating forms of speech and the ideas which they suggested to him, but having no finer perception, he had admired in M. Verdurin's remarks the most courageous stoicism. "All the same, it is a great talent that has gone from the world." "What, are you still talking about Dechambre," said M. Verdurin, who had gone on ahead of us, and, seeing that we were not following him, had turned back. "Listen," he said to Brichot, "nothing is gained by exaggeration. The fact of his being dead is no excuse for making him out a genius, which he was not. He played well, I admit, and what is more, he was in his proper element here; transplanted, he ceased to exist. My wife was infatuated with him and made his reputation. You know what she is. I will go farther, in the interest of his own reputation he

has died at the right moment, he is done to a turn, as the demoiselles de Caen, grilled according to the incomparable recipe of Pampilles, are going to be, I hope (unless you keep us standing here all night with your jeremiads in this Kasbah exposed to all the winds of heaven). You don't seriously expect us all to die of hunger because Dechambre is dead, when for the last year he was obliged to practise scales before giving a concert; to recover for the moment, and for the moment only, the suppleness of his wrists. Besides, you are going to hear this evening, or at any rate to meet, for the rascal is too fond of deserting his art, after dinner, for the card-table, somebody who is a far greater artist than Dechambre, a youngster whom my wife has discovered" (as she had discovered Dechambre, and Paderewski, and everybody else): "Morel. He has not arrived yet, the devil. I shall have to send a carriage down to meet the last train. He is coming with an old friend of his family whom he has picked up, and who bores him to tears, but otherwise, not to get into trouble with his father, he would have been obliged to stay down at Doncières and keep him company: the Baron de Charlus." The faithful entered the drawing-room. M. Verdurin, who had remained behind with me while I took off my things, took my arm by way of a joke, as one's host does at a dinner-party when there is no lady for one to take in. "Did you have a pleasant journey?" "Yes, M. Brichot told me things which interested me greatly," said I, thinking of the etymologies, and because I had heard that the Verdurins greatly admired Brichot. "I am surprised to hear that he told you anything," said M. Verdurin, "he is such a retiring man, and talks so little about the things he knows." This compliment did not strike me as being very apt. "He seems charming,"

I remarked. "Exquisite, delicious, not the sort of man you meet every day, such a light, fantastic touch, my wife adores him, and so do I!" replied M. Verdurin in an exaggerated tone, as though repeating a lesson. Only then did I grasp that what he had said to me about Brichot was ironical. And I asked myself whether M. Verdurin, since those far-off days of which I had heard reports, had not shaken off the yoke of his wife's tutelage.

The sculptor was greatly astonished to learn that the Verdurins were willing to have M. de Charlus in their house. Whereas in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where M. de Charlus was so well known, nobody ever referred to his morals (of which most people had no suspicion, others remained doubtful, crediting him rather with intense but Platonic friendships, with behaving imprudently, while the enlightened few strenuously denied, shrugging their shoulders, any insinuation upon which some malicious Gallardon might venture), those morals, the nature of which was known perhaps to a few intimate friends, were, on the other hand, being denounced daily far from the circle in which he moved, just as, at times, the sound of artillery fire is audible only beyond a zone of silence. Moreover, in those professional and artistic circles where he was regarded as the typical instance of inversion, his great position in society, his noble origin were completely unknown, by a process analogous to that which, among the people of Rumania, has brought it about that the name of Ronsard is known as that of a great nobleman, while his poetical work is unknown there. Not only that, the Rumanian estimate of Ronsard's nobility is founded upon an error. Similarly, if in the world of painters and actors M. de Charlus had such an

evil reputation, that was due to their confusing him with a certain Comte Leblois de Charlus who was not even related to him (or, if so, the connexion was extremely remote), and who had been arrested, possibly by mistake, in the course of a police raid which had become historic. In short, all the stories related of our M. de Charlus referred to the other. Many professionals swore that they had had relations with M. de Charlus, and did so in good faith, believing that the false M. de Charlus was the true one, the false one possibly encouraging, partly from an affectation of nobility, partly to conceal his vice, a confusion which to the true one (the Baron whom we already know) was for a long time damaging, and afterwards, when he had begun to go down the hill, became a convenience, for it enabled him likewise to say: "That is not myself." And in the present instance it was not he to whom the rumours referred. Finally, what enhanced the falsehood of the reports of an actual fact (the Baron's tendencies), he had had an intimate and perfectly pure friendship with an author who, in the theatrical world, had for some reason acquired a similar reputation which he in no way deserved. When they were seen together at a first night, people would say: "You see," just as it was supposed that the Duchesse de Guermantes had immoral relations with the Princesse de Parme; an indestructible legend, for it would be disproved only in the presence of those two great ladies themselves, to which the people who repeated it would presumably never come any nearer than by staring at them through their glasses in the theatre and slandering them to the occupant of the next stall. Given M. de Charlus's morals, the sculptor concluded all the more readily that the Baron's social posi-

tion must be equally low, since he had no sort of information whatever as to the family to which M. de Charlus belonged, his title or his name. Just as Cottard imagined that everybody knew that the degree of Doctor of Medicine implied nothing, the title of Consultant to a Hospital meant something, so people in society are mistaken when they suppose that everybody has the same idea of the social importance of their name as they themselves and the other people of their set.

The Prince d'Agrigente was regarded as a swindler by a club servant to whom he owed twenty-five louis, and regained his importance only in the Faubourg Saint-Germain where he had three sisters who were Duchesses, for it is not among the humble people in whose eyes he is of small account, but among the smart people who know what is what, that the great nobleman creates an effect. M. de Charlus, for that matter, was to learn in the course of the evening that his host had the vaguest ideas about the most illustrious ducal families.

Certain that the Verdurins were making a grave mistake in allowing an individual of tarnished reputation to be admitted to so "select" a household as theirs, the sculptor felt it his duty to take the Mistress aside. "You are entirely mistaken, besides I never pay any attention to those tales, and even if it were true, I may be allowed to point out that it could hardly compromise *me!*" replied Mme. Verdurin, furious, for, Morel being the principal feature of the Wednesdays, the chief thing for her was not to give any offence to him. As for Cottard, he could not express an opinion, for he had asked leave to go upstairs for a moment to "do a little job" in the *buen*

retiro, and after that, in M. Verdurin's bedroom, to write an extremely urgent letter for a patient.

A great publisher from Paris who had come to call, expecting to be invited to stay to dinner, withdrew abruptly, quickly, realising that he was not smart enough for the little clan. He was a tall, stout man, very dark, with a studious and somewhat cutting air. He reminded one of an ebony paper-knife.

Mme. Verdurin who, to welcome us in her immense drawing-room, in which displays of grasses, poppies, field-flowers, plucked only that morning, alternated with a similar theme painted on the walls, two centuries earlier, by an artist of exquisite taste, had risen for a moment from a game of cards which she was playing with an old friend, begged us to excuse her for just one minute while she finished her game, talking to us the while. What I told her about my impressions did not, however, seem altogether to please her. For one thing I was shocked to observe that she and her husband came indoors every day long before the hour of those sunsets which were considered so fine when seen from that cliff, and finer still from the terrace of la Raspelière, and which I would have travelled miles to see. "Yes, it's incomparable," said Mme. Verdurin carelessly, with a glance at the huge windows which gave the room a wall of glass. "Even though we have it always in front of us, we never grow tired of it," and she turned her attention back to her cards. Now my very enthusiasm made me exacting. I expressed my regret that I could not see from the drawing-room the rocks of Darnetal, which, Elstir had told me, were quite lovely at that hour, when they reflected so many colours. "Ah! You can't see them from here,

you would have to go to the end of the park, to the 'view of the bay.' From the seat there, you can take in the whole panorama. But you can't go there by yourself, you will lose your way. I can take you there, if you like," she added kindly. "No, no, you are not satisfied with the illness you had the other day, you want to make yourself ill again. He will come back, he can see the view of the bay another time." I did not insist, and understood that it was enough for the Verdurins to know that this sunset made its way into their drawing-room or dining-room, like a magnificent painting, like a priceless Japanese enamel, justifying the high rent that they were paying for la Raspelière, with plate and linen, but a thing to which they rarely raised their eyes; the important thing, here, for them was to live comfortably, to take drives, to feed well, to talk, to entertain agreeable friends whom they provided with amusing games of billiards, good meals, merry tea-parties. I noticed, however, later on, how intelligently they had learned to know the district, taking their guests for excursions as "novel" as the music to which they made them listen. The part which the flowers of la Raspelière, the roads by the sea's edge, the old houses, the undiscovered churches, played in the life of M. Verdurin was so great that those people who saw him only in Paris and who, themselves, substituted for the life by the seaside and in the country the refinements of life in town could barely understand the idea that he himself formed of his own life, or the importance that his pleasures gave him in his own eyes. This importance was further enhanced by the fact that the Verdurins were convinced that la Raspelière, which they hoped to purchase, was a property without its match in

the world. This superiority which their self-esteem made them attribute to la Raspelière justified in their eyes my enthusiasm which, but for that, would have annoyed them slightly, because of the disappointments which it involved (like my disappointment when long ago I had first listened to Berma) and which I frankly admitted to them.

"I hear the carriage coming back," the Mistress suddenly murmured. Let us state briefly that Mme. Verdurin, quite apart from the inevitable changes due to increasing years, no longer resembled what she had been at the time when Swann and Odette used to listen to the little phrase in her house. Even when she heard it played, she was no longer obliged to assume the air of attenuated admiration which she used to assume then, for that had become her normal expression. Under the influence of the countless neuralgias which the music of Bach, Wagner, Vinteuil, Debussy had given her, Mme. Verdurin's brow had assumed enormous proportions, like limbs that are finally crippled by rheumatism. Her temples, suggestive of a pair of beautiful, pain-stricken, milk-white spheres, in which Harmony rolled endlessly, flung back upon either side her silvered tresses, and proclaimed, on the Mistress's behalf, without any need for her to say a word: "I know what is in store for me to-night." Her features no longer took the trouble to formulate successively aesthetic impressions of undue violence, for they had themselves become their permanent expression on a countenance ravaged and superb. This attitude of resignation to the ever impending sufferings inflicted by Beauty, and of the courage that was required to make her dress for dinner when she had barely recovered from the effects of the last sonata, had the result that Mme.

Verdurin, even when listening to the most heartrending music, preserved a disdainfully impassive countenance, and actually withdrew into retirement to swallow her two spoonfuls of aspirin.

"Why, yes, here they are!" M. Verdurin cried with relief when he saw the door open to admit Morel, followed by M. de Charlus. The latter, to whom dining with the Verdurins meant not so much going into society as going into questionable surroundings, was as frightened as a schoolboy making his way for the first time into a brothel with the utmost deference towards its mistress. Moreover the persistent desire that M. de Charlus felt to appear virile and frigid was overcome (when he appeared in the open doorway) by those traditional ideas of politeness which are awakened as soon as shyness destroys an artificial attitude and makes an appeal to the resources of the subconscious. When it is a Charlus, whether he be noble or plebeian, that is stirred by such a sentiment of instinctive and atavistic politeness to strangers, it is always the spirit of a relative of the female sex, attendant like a goddess, or incarnate as a double, that undertakes to introduce him into a strange drawing-room and to mould his attitude until he comes face to face with his hostess. Thus a young painter, brought up by a godly, Protestant, female cousin, will enter a room, his head aslant and quivering, his eyes raised to the ceiling, his hands gripping an invisible muff, the remembered shape of which and its real and tutelary presence will help the frightened artist to cross without agoraphobia the yawning abyss between the hall and the inner drawing-room. Thus it was that the pious relative, whose memory is helping him to-day, used to enter a room years ago, and

with so plaintive an air that one was asking oneself what calamity she had come to announce, when from her first words one realised, as now in the case of the painter, that she had come to pay an after-dinner call. By virtue of the same law, which requires that life, in the interests of the still unfulfilled act, shall bring into play, utilise, adulterate, in a perpetual prostitution, the most respectable, it may be the most sacred, sometimes only the most innocent legacies from the past, and albeit in this instance it engendered a different aspect, the one of Mme. Cottard's nephews who distressed his family by his effeminate ways and the company he kept would always make a joyous entry as though he had a surprise in store for you or were going to inform you that he had been left a fortune, radiant with a happiness which it would have been futile to ask him to explain, it being due to his unconscious heredity and his misplaced sex. He walked upon tiptoe, was no doubt himself astonished that he was not holding a cardcase, offered you his hand parting his lips as he had seen his aunt part hers, and his uneasy glance was directed at the mirror in which he seemed to wish to make certain, albeit he was bare-headed, whether his hat, as Mme. Cottard had once inquired of Swann, was not askew. As for M. de Charlus, whom the society in which he had lived furnished, at this critical moment, with different examples, with other patterns of affability, and above all with the maxim that one must, in certain cases, when dealing with people of humble rank, bring into play and make use of one's rarest graces, which one normally holds in reserve, it was with a flutter, archly, and with the same sweep with which a skirt would have enlarged and impeded his waddling motion that he advanced upon Mme. Verdurin with so flattered and honoured an

air that one would have said that to be taken to her house was for him a supreme favour. His head inclined forwards, his face, upon which satisfaction vied with propriety, was creased with little wrinkles of affability. One would have thought that it was Mme. de Marsantes who was entering the room, so prominent at that moment was the woman whom a mistake on the part of Nature had enshrined in the body of M. de Charlus. It was true that the Baron had made every effort to obliterate this mistake and to assume a masculine appearance. But no sooner had he succeeded than, he having in the meantime kept the same tastes, this habit of looking at things through a woman's eyes gave him a fresh feminine appearance, due this time not to heredity but to his own way of living. And as he had gradually come to regard even social questions from the feminine point of view, and without noticing it, for it is not only by dint of lying to other people, but also by lying to oneself that one ceases to be aware that one is lying, albeit he had called upon his body to manifest (at the moment of his entering the Verdurins' drawing-room) all the courtesy of a great nobleman, that body which had fully understood what M. de Charlus had ceased to apprehend, displayed, to such an extent that the Baron would have deserved the epithet "ladylike," all the attractions of a great lady. Not that there need be any connexion between the appearance of M. de Charlus and the fact that sons, who do not always take after their fathers, even without being inverts, and though they go after women, may consummate upon their faces the profanation of their mothers. But we need not consider here a subject that deserves a chapter to itself: the Profanation of the Mother.

Albeit other reasons dictated this transformation of M.

de Charlus, and purely physical ferments set his material substance "working" and made his body pass gradually into the category of women's bodies, nevertheless the change that we record here was of spiritual origin. By dint of supposing yourself to be ill you become ill, grow thin, are too weak to rise from your bed, suffer from nervous enteritis. By dint of thinking tenderly of men you become a woman, and an imaginary skirt hampers your movements. The obsession, just as in the other instance it affects your health, may in this instance alter your sex. Morel, who accompanied him, came to shake hands with me. From that first moment, owing to a two-fold change that occurred in him I formed (alas, I was not warned in time to act upon it!) a bad impression of him. I have said that Morel, having risen above his father's menial status, was generally pleased to indulge in a contemptuous familiarity. He had talked to me on the day when he brought me the photographs without once addressing me as Monsieur, treating me as an inferior. What was my surprise at Mme. Verdurin's to see him bow very low before me, and before me alone, and to hear, before he had even uttered a syllable to anyone else, words of respect, most respectful—such words as I thought could not possibly flow from his pen or fall from his lips—addressed to myself. I at once suspected that he had some favour to ask of me. Taking me aside a minute later: "Monsieur would be doing me a very great service," he said to me, going so far this time as to address me in the third person, "by keeping from Mme. Verdurin and her guests the nature of the profession that my father practised with his uncle. It would be best to say that he was, in your family, the agent for estates so

considerable as to put him almost on a level with your parents." Morel's request annoyed me intensely because it obliged me to magnify not his father's position, in which I took not the slightest interest, but the wealth—the apparent wealth of my own, which I felt to be absurd. But he appeared so unhappy, so pressing, that I could not refuse him. "No, before dinner," he said in an imploring tone, "Monsieur can easily find some excuse for taking Mme. Verdurin aside." This was what, in the end, I did, trying to enhance to the best of my ability the distinction of Morel's father, without unduly exaggerating the "style," the "worldly goods" of my own family. It went like a letter through the post, notwithstanding the astonishment of Mme. Verdurin, who had had a nodding acquaintance with my grandfather. And as she had no tact, hated family life (that dissolvent of the little nucleus), after telling me that she remembered, long ago, seeing my great-grandfather, and after speaking of him as of somebody who was almost an idiot, who would have been incapable of understanding the little group, and who, to use her expression, "was not one of us," she said to me: "Families are such a bore, the only thing is to get right away from them;" and at once proceeded to tell me of a trait in my great-grandfather's character of which I was unaware, although I might have suspected it at home (I had never seen him, but they frequently spoke of him), his remarkable stinginess (in contrast to the somewhat excessive generosity of my great-uncle, the friend of the lady in pink and Morel's father's employer): "Why, of course, if your grandparents had such a grand agent, that only shews that there are all sorts of people in a family. Your grandfather's father was so stingy

that, at the end of his life, when he was almost half-witted —between you and me, he was never anything very special, you are worth the whole lot of them—he could not bring himself to pay a penny for his ride on the omnibus. So that they were obliged to have him followed by somebody who paid his fare for him, and to let the old miser think that his friend M. de Persigny, the Cabinet Minister, had given him a permit to travel free on the omnibuses. But I am delighted to hear that *our* Morel's father held such a good position. I was under the impression that he had been a schoolmaster, but that's nothing, I must have misunderstood. In any case, it makes not the slightest difference, for I must tell you that here we appreciate only true worth, the personal contribution, what I call the participation. Provided that a person is artistic, provided in a word that he is one of the brotherhood, nothing else matters." The way in which Morel was one of the brotherhood was—so far as I have been able to discover—that he was sufficiently fond of both women and men to satisfy either sex with the fruits of his experience of the other. But what it is essential to note here is that as soon as I had given him my word that I would speak on his behalf to Mme. Verdurin, as soon, moreover, as I had actually done so, and without any possibility of subsequent retractation, Morel's "respect" for myself vanished as though by magic, the formal language of respect melted away, and indeed for some time he avoided me, contriving to appear contemptuous of me, so that if Mme. Verdurin wanted me to give him a message, to ask him to play something, he would continue to talk to one of the faithful, then move on to another, changing his seat if I approached him.

The others were obliged to tell him three or four times that I had spoken to him, after which he would reply, with an air of constraint, briefly, that is to say unless we were by ourselves. When that happened, he was expansive, friendly, for there was a charming side to him. I concluded all the same from this first evening that his must be a vile nature, that he would not, at a pinch, shrink from any act of meanness, was incapable of gratitude. In which he resembled the majority of mankind. But inasmuch as I had inherited a strain of my grandmother's nature, and enjoyed the diversity of other people without expecting anything of them or resenting anything that they did, I overlooked his baseness, rejoiced in his gaiety when it was in evidence, and indeed in what I believe to have been a genuine affection on his part when, having gone the whole circuit of his false ideas of human nature, he realised (with a jerk, for he shewed strange reversions to a blind and primitive savagery) that my kindness to him was disinterested, that my indulgence arose not from a want of perception but from what he called goodness; and, more important still, I was enraptured by his art which indeed was little more than an admirable virtuosity, but which made me (without his being in the intellectual sense of the word a real musician) hear again or for the first time so much good music. Moreover a manager—M. de Charlus (whom I had not suspected of such talents, albeit Mme. de Guermantes, who had known him a very different person in their younger days, asserted that he had composed a sonata for her, painted a fan, and so forth), modest in regard to his true merits, but possessing talents of the first order, contrived to place this virtuosity at the service of a versa-

tile artistic sense which increased it tenfold. Imagine a merely skilful performer in the Russian ballet, formed, educated, developed in all directions by M. Diaghileff.

I had just given Mme. Verdurin the message with which Morel had charged me and was talking to M. de Charlus about Saint-Loup, when Cottard burst into the room announcing, as though the house were on fire, that the Cambremers had arrived. Mme. Verdurin, not wishing to appear before strangers such as M. de Charlus (whom Cottard had not seen) and myself to attach any great importance to the arrival of the Cambremers, did not move, made no response to the announcement of these tidings, and merely said to the doctor, fanning herself gracefully, and adopting the tone of a Marquise in the Théâtre-Français: "The Baron has just been telling us. . . ." This was too much for Cottard! Less abruptly than he would have done in the old days, for learning and high positions had added weight to his utterance, but with the emotion, nevertheless, which he recaptured at the Verdurins', he exclaimed: "A Baron! What Baron? Where's the Baron?" staring round the room with an astonishment that bordered on incredulity. Mme. Verdurin, with the affected indifference of a hostess when a servant has, in front of her guests, broken a valuable glass, and with the artificial, high-falutin tone of a conservatoire prize-winner acting in a play by the younger Dumas, replied, pointing with her fan to Morel's patron: "Why, the Baron de Charlus, to whom let me introduce you, M. le Professeur Cottard." Mme. Verdurin was, for that matter, by no means sorry to have an opportunity of playing the leading lady. M. de Charlus proffered two fingers which the Professor clasped with the

kindly smile of a "Prince of Science." But he stopped short upon seeing the Cambremers enter the room, while M. de Charlus led me into a corner to tell me something, not without feeling my muscles, which is a German habit. M. de Cambremer bore no resemblance to the old Marquise. To anyone who had only heard of him, or of letters written by him, well and forcibly expressed, his personal appearance was startling. No doubt, one would grow accustomed to it. But his nose had chosen to place itself aslant above his mouth, perhaps the only crooked line, among so many, which one would never have thought of tracing upon his face, and one that indicated a vulgar stupidity, aggravated still further by the proximity of a Norman complexion on cheeks that were like two ripe apples. It is possible that the eyes of M. de Cambremer retained behind their eyelids a trace of the sky of the Cotentin, so soft upon sunny days when the wayfarer amuses himself in watching, drawn up by the roadside, and counting in their hundreds the shadows of the poplars, but those eyelids, heavy, bleared and drooping, would have prevented the least flash of intelligence from escaping. And so, discouraged by the meagreness of that azure glance, one returned to the big crooked nose. By a transposition of the senses, M. de Cambremer looked at you with his nose. This nose of his was not ugly, it was if anything too handsome, too bold, too proud of its own importance. Arched, polished, gleaming, brand new, it was amply prepared to atone for the inadequacy of his eyes. Unfortunately, if the eyes are sometimes the organ through which our intelligence is revealed, the nose (to leave out of account the intimate solidarity and the unsuspected repercussion of

one feature upon the rest), the nose is generally the organ in which stupidity is most readily displayed.

The propriety of the dark clothes which M. de Cambremer invariably wore, even in the morning, might well reassure those who were dazzled and exasperated by the insolent brightness of the seaside attire of people whom they did not know; still it was impossible to understand why the chief magistrate's wife should have declared with an air of discernment and authority, as a person who knows far more than you about the high society of Alençon, that on seeing M. de Cambremer one immediately felt oneself, even before one knew who he was, in the presence of a man of supreme distinction, of a man of perfect breeding, a change from the sort of person one saw at Balbec, a man in short in whose company one could breathe freely. He was to her, stifled by all those Balbec tourists who did not know her world, like a bottle of smelling salts. It seemed to me on the contrary that he was one of the people whom my grandmother would at once have set down as "all wrong," and that, as she had no conception of snobbishness, she would no doubt have been stupefied that he could have succeeded in winning the hand of Mlle. Legrandin, who must surely be difficult to please, having a brother who was "so refined." At best one might have said of M. de Cambremer's plebeian ugliness that it was redolent of the soil and preserved a very ancient local tradition; one was reminded, on examining his faulty features, which one would have liked to correct, of those names of little Norman towns as to the etymology of which my friend the curé was mistaken because the peasants, mispronouncing the names, or having misunderstood the Latin or Norman words that underlay

them, have finally fixed in a barbarism to be found already in the cartularies, as Brichot would have said, a wrong meaning and a fault of pronunciation. Life in these little old towns may, for all that, be pleasant enough, and M. de Cambremer must have had his good points, for if it was in a mother's nature that the old Marquise should prefer her son to her daughter-in-law, on the other hand, she, who had other children, of whom two at least were not devoid of merit, was often heard to declare that the Marquis was, in her opinion, the best of the family. During the short time he had spent in the army, his messmates, finding Cambremer too long a name to pronounce, had given him the nickname Cancan, implying a flow of chatter, which he in no way merited. He knew how to brighten a dinner-party to which he was invited by saying when the fish (even if it were stale) or the entrée came in: "I say, that looks a fine animal." And his wife, who had adopted upon entering the family everything that she supposed to form part of their customs, put herself on the level of her husband's friends and perhaps sought to please him, like a mistress, and as though she had been involved in his bachelor existence, by saying in a careless tone when she was speaking of him to officers: "You shall see Cancan presently. Cancan has gone to Balbec, but he will be back this evening." She was furious at having compromised herself by coming to the Verdurins' and had done so only upon the entreaties of her mother-in-law and husband, in the hope of renewing the lease. But, being less well-bred than they, she made no secret of the ulterior motive and for the last fortnight had been making fun of this dinner-party to her women friends. "You know we are going to dine with our ten-

ants. That will be well worth an increased rent. As a matter of fact, I am rather curious to see what they have done to our poor old la Raspelière" (as though she had been born in the house, and would find there all her old family associations). "Our old keeper told me only yesterday that you wouldn't know the place. I can't bear to think of all that must be going on there. I am sure we shall have to have the whole place disinfected before we move in again." She arrived haughty and morose, with the air of a great lady whose castle, owing to a state of war, is occupied by the enemy, but who nevertheless feels herself at home and makes a point of shewing the conquerors that they are intruding. Mme. de Cambremer could not see me at first for I was in a bay at the side of the room with M. de Charlus, who was telling me that he had heard from Morel that Morel's father had been an "agent" in my family, and that he, Charlus, credited me with sufficient intelligence and magnanimity (a term common to himself and Swann) to forego the mean and ignoble pleasure which vulgar little idiots (I was warned) would not have failed, in my place, to give themselves by revealing to our hosts details which they might regard as derogatory. "The mere fact that I take an interest in him and extend my protection over him, gives him a pre-eminence and wipes out the past," the Baron concluded. As I listened to him and promised the silence which I would have kept even without any hope of being considered in return intelligent and magnanimous, I was looking at Mme. de Cambremer. And I had difficulty in recognising the melting, savoury morsel which I had had beside me the other afternoon at tea-time, on the terrace at Balbec, in the Norman rock-cake

that I now saw, hard as a rock, in which the faithful would in vain have tried to set their teeth. Irritated in anticipation by the knowledge that her husband inherited his mother's simple kindliness, which would make him assume a flattered expression whenever one of the faithful was presented to him, anxious however to perform her duty as a leader of society, when Brichot had been named to her she decided to make him and her husband acquainted, as she had seen her more fashionable friends do, but, anger or pride prevailing over the desire to shew her knowledge of the world, she said, not, as she ought to have said: "Allow me to introduce my husband," but: "I introduce you to my husband," holding aloft thus the banner of the Cambremers, without avail, for her husband bowed as low before Brichot as she had expected. But all Mme. de Cambremer's ill humour vanished in an instant when her eye fell on M. de Charlus, whom she knew by sight. Never had she succeeded in obtaining an introduction, even at the time of her intimacy with Swann. For as M. de Charlus always sided with the woman, with his sister-in-law against M. de Guermantes's mistresses, with Odette, at that time still unmarried, but an old flame of Swann's, against the new, he had, as a stern defender of morals and faithful protector of homes, given Odette—and kept—the promise that he would never allow himself to be presented to Mme. de Cambremer. She had certainly never guessed that it was at the Verdurins' that she was at length to meet this unapproachable person. M. de Cambremer knew that this was a great joy to her, so great that he himself was moved by it and looked at his wife with an air that implied: "You are glad now you decided to come, aren't you?" He spoke very little,

knowing that he had married a superior woman. "I, all unworthy," he would say at every moment, and spontaneously quoted a fable of La Fontaine and one of Florian which seemed to him to apply to his ignorance, and at the same time to enable him, beneath the outward form of a contemptuous flattery, to shew the men of science who were not members of the Jockey that one might be a sportsman and yet have read fables. The unfortunate thing was that he knew only two of them. And so they kept cropping up. Mme. de Cambremer was no fool, but she had a number of extremely irritating habits. With her the corruption of names bore absolutely no trace of aristocratic disdain. She was not the person to say, like the Duchesse de Guermantes (whom the mere fact of her birth ought to have preserved even more than Mme. de Cambremer from such an absurdity), with a pretence of not remembering the unfashionable name (albeit it is now that of one of the women whom it is most difficult to approach) of Julien de Monchâteau: "a little Madame . . . Pica della Mirandola." No, when Mme. de Cambremer said a name wrong it was out of kindness of heart, so as not to appear to know some damaging fact, and when, in her sincerity, she admitted it, she tried to conceal it by altering it. If, for instance, she was defending a woman, she would try to conceal the fact, while determined not to lie to the person who had asked her to tell the truth, that Madame So-and-so was at the moment the mistress of M. Sylvain Lévy, and would say: "No . . . I know absolutely nothing about her, I fancy that people used to charge her with having inspired a passion in a gentleman whose name I don't know, something like Cahn, Kohn, Kuhn; anyhow, I be-

lieve the gentleman has been dead for years and that there was never anything between them." This is an analogous, but contrary process to that adopted by liars who think that if they alter their statement of what they have been doing when they make it to a mistress or merely to another man, their listener will not immediately see that the expression (like her Cahn, Kohn, Kuhn) is interpolated, is of a different texture from the rest of the conversation, has a double meaning.

Mme. Verdurin whispered in her husband's ear: "Shall I offer my arm to the Baron de Charlus? As you will have Mme. de Cambremer on your right, we might divide the honours." "No," said M. Verdurin, "since the other is higher in rank" (meaning that M. de Cambremer was a Marquis), "M. de Charlus is, strictly speaking, his inferior." "Very well, I shall put him beside the Princess." And Mme. Verdurin introduced Mme. Sherbatoff to M. de Charlus; each of them bowed in silence, with an air of knowing all about the other and of promising a mutual secrecy. M. Verdurin introduced me to M. de Cambremer. Before he had even begun to speak in his loud and slightly stammering voice, his tall figure and high complexion displayed in their oscillation the martial hesitation of a commanding officer who tries to put you at your ease and says: "I have heard about you, I shall see what can be done; your punishment shall be remitted; we don't thirst for blood here; it will be all right." Then, as he shook my hand: "I think you know my mother," he said to me. The word "think" seemed to him appropriate to the discretion of a first meeting, but not to imply any uncertainty, for he went on: "I have a note for you from her." M. de Cambremer took a childish pleasure in

revisiting a place where he had lived for so long. "I am at home again," he said to Mme. Verdurin, while his eyes marvelled at recognising the flowers painted on panels over the doors, and the marble busts on their high pedestals. He might, all the same, have felt himself at sea, for Mme. Verdurin had brought with her a quantity of fine old things of her own. In this respect, Mme. Verdurin, while regarded by the Cambremers as having turned everything upside down, was not revolutionary but intelligently conservative in a sense which they did not understand. They were thus wrong in accusing her of hating the old house and of degrading it by hanging plain cloth curtains instead of their rich plush, like an ignorant parish priest reproaching a diocesan architect with putting back in its place the old carved wood which the cleric had thrown on the rubbish heap, and had seen fit to replace with ornaments purchased in the Place Saint-Sulpice. Furthermore, a herb garden was beginning to take the place, in front of the mansion, of the borders that were the pride not merely of the Cambremers but of their gardener. The latter, who regarded the Cambremers as his sole masters, and groaned beneath the yoke of the Verdurins, as though the place were under occupation for the moment by an invading army, went in secret to unburden his griefs to its dispossessed mistress, grew irate at the scorn that was heaped upon his araucarias, begonias, house-leeks, double dahlias, and at anyone's daring in so grand a place to grow such common plants as camomile and maidenhair. Mme. Verdurin felt this silent opposition and had made up her mind, if she took a long lease of la Raspelière or even bought the place, to make one of her conditions the dismissal of the gardener,

by whom his old mistress, on the contrary, set great store. He had worked for her without payment, when times were bad, he adored her; but by that odd multiformity of opinion which we find in the lower orders, among whom the most profound moral scorn is embedded in the most passionate admiration, which in turn overlaps old and undying grudges, he used often to say of Mme. de Cambremer who, in '70, in a house that she owned in the East of France, surprised by the invasion, had been obliged to endure for a month the contact of the Germans: "What many people can't forgive Mme. la Marquise is that during the war she took the side of the Prussians and even had them to stay in her house. At any other time, I could understand it; but in war time, she ought not to have done it. It is not right." So that he was faithful to her unto death, venerated her for her goodness, and firmly believed that she had been guilty of treason. Mme. Verdurin was annoyed that M. de Cambremer should pretend to feel so much at home at la Raspelière. "You must notice a good many changes, all the same," she replied. "For one thing there were those big bronze Barbedienne devils and some horrid little plush chairs which I packed off at once to the attic, though even that is too good a place for them." After this bitter retort to M. de Cambremer, she offered him her arm to go in to dinner. He hesitated for a moment, saying to himself: "I can't, really, go in before M. de Charlus." But supposing the other to be an old friend of the house, seeing that he was not set in the post of honour, he decided to take the arm that was offered him and told Mme. Verdurin how proud he felt to be admitted into the symposium (so it was that he styled the little nucleus, not

without a smile of satisfaction at his knowledge of the term). Cottard, who was seated next to M. de Charlus, beamed at him through his glass, to make his acquaintance and to break the ice, with a series of winks far more insistent than they would have been in the old days, and not interrupted by fits of shyness. And these engaging glances, enhanced by the smile that accompanied them, were no longer dammed by the glass but overflowed on all sides. The Baron, who readily imagined people of his own kind everywhere, had no doubt that Cottard was one, and was making eyes at him. At once he turned on the Professor the cold shoulder of the invert, as contemptuous of those whom he attracts as he is ardent in pursuit of such as attract him. No doubt, albeit each one of us speaks mendaciously of the pleasure, always refused him by destiny, of being loved, it is a general law, the application of which is by no means confined to the Charlus type, that the person whom we do not love and who does love us seems to us quite intolerable. To such a person, to a woman of whom we say not that she loves us but that she bores us, we prefer the society of any other, who has neither her charm, nor her looks, nor her brains. She will recover these, in our estimation, only when she has ceased to love us. In this light, we might see only the transposition, into odd terms, of this universal rule in the irritation aroused in an invert by a man who displeases him and runs after him. And so, whereas the ordinary man seeks to conceal what he feels, the invert is implacable in making it felt by the man who provokes it, as he would certainly not make it felt by a woman, M. de Charlus for instance by the Princesse de Guermantes, whose passion for him bored him, but flat-

tered him. But when they see another man shew a peculiar liking for them, then, whether because they fail to realise that this liking is the same as their own, or because it annoys them to be reminded that this liking, which they glorify so long as it is they themselves that feel it, is regarded as a vice, or from a desire to rehabilitate themselves by a sensational display in circumstances in which it costs them nothing, or from a fear of being unmasked which they at once recover as soon as desire no longer leads them blindfold from one imprudence to another, or from rage at being subjected, by the equivocal attitude of another person, to the injury which, by their own attitude, if that other person attracted them, they would not be afraid to inflict on him, the men who do not in the least mind following a young man for miles, never taking their eyes off him in the theatre, even if he is with friends, and there is therefore a danger of their compromising him with them, may be heard, if a man who does not attract them merely looks at them, to say: "Sir, for what do you take me?" (simply because he takes them for what they are) "I don't understand, no, don't attempt to explain, you are quite mistaken," pass if need be from words to blows, and, to a person who knows the imprudent stranger, wax indignant: "What, you know that loathsome creature. He stares at one so! . . . A fine way to behave!" M. de Charlus did not go quite so far as this, but assumed the offended, glacial air adopted, when one appears to be suspecting them, by women who are not of easy virtue, even more by women who are. Furthermore, the invert brought face to face with an invert sees not merely an unpleasing image of himself which, being purely inanimate, could at the worst

only injure his self-esteem, but a second self, living, acting in the same sphere, capable therefore of injuring him in his loves. And so it is from an instinct of self-preservation that he will speak evil of the possible rival, whether to people who are able to do him some injury (nor does invert the first mind being thought a liar when he thus denounces invert the second before people who may know all about his own case), or to the young man whom he has "picked up," who is perhaps going to be snatched away from him and whom it is important to persuade that the very things which it is to his advantage to do with the speaker would be the bane of his life if he allowed himself to do them with the other person. To M. de Charlus, who was thinking perhaps of the—wholly imaginary—dangers in which the presence of this Cottard whose smile he misinterpreted might involve Morel, an invert who did not attract him was not merely a caricature of himself, but was a deliberate rival. A tradesman, practising an uncommon trade, who, on his arrival in the provincial town where he intends to settle for life discovers that, in the same square, directly opposite, the same trade is being carried on by a competitor, is no more discomfited than a Charlus who goes down to a quiet spot to make love unobserved and, on the day of his arrival, catches sight of the local squire or the barber, whose aspect and manner leave no room for doubt. The tradesman often comes to regard his competitor with hatred; this hatred degenerates at times into melancholy, and, if there be but a sufficient strain of heredity, one has seen in small towns the tradesman begin to shew signs of insanity which is cured only by his deciding to sell his stock and goodwill and remove to another place. The

invert's rage is even more agonising. He has realised that from the first moment the squire and the barber have desired his young companion. Even though he repeat to him a hundred times daily that the barber and the squire are scoundrels whose contact would dishonour him, he is obliged, like Harpagon, to watch over his treasure, and rises in the night to make sure that it is not being stolen. And it is this no doubt that, even more than desire, or the convenience of habits shared in common, and almost as much as that experience of oneself which is the only true experience, makes one invert detect another with a rapidity and certainty that are almost infallible. He may be mistaken for a moment, but a rapid divination brings him back to the truth. And so M. de Charlus's error was brief. His divine discernment shewed him after the first minute that Cottard was not of his kind, and that he need not fear his advances either for himself, which would merely have annoyed him, or for Morel, which would have seemed to him a more serious matter. He recovered his calm, and as he was still beneath the influence of the transit of Venus Androgyne, now and again, he smiled a faint smile at the Verdurins without taking the trouble to open his mouth, merely curving his lips at one corner, and for an instant kindled a coquettish light in his eyes, he so obsessed with virility, exactly as his sister-in-law the Duchesse de Guermantes might have done. "Do you shoot much, Sir?" said M. Verdurin with a note of contempt to M. de Cambremer. "Has Ski told you of the near shave we had to-day?" Cottard inquired of the mistress. "I shoot mostly in the forest of Chantepie," replied M. de Cambremer. "No, I have told her nothing," said Ski. "Does it deserve its

name?" Brichot asked M. de Cambremer, after a glance at me from the corner of his eye, for he had promised me that he would introduce the topic of derivations, begging me at the same time not to let the Cambremers know the scorn that he felt for those furnished by the Combray curé. "I am afraid I must be very stupid, but I don't grasp your question," said M. de Cambremer. "I mean to say: do many pies sing in it?" replied Brichot. Cottard meanwhile could not bear Mme. Verdurin's not knowing that they had nearly missed the train. "Out with it," Mme. Cottard said to her husband encouragingly, "tell us your odyssey." "Well, really, it is quite out of the ordinary," said the doctor, and repeated his narrative from the beginning. "When I saw that the train was in the station, I stood thunderstruck. It was all Ski's fault. You are somewhat wide of the mark in your information, my dear fellow! And there was Brichot waiting for us at the station!" "I assumed," said the scholar, casting around him what he could still muster of a glance and smiling with his thin lips, "that if you had been detained at Graincourt, it would mean that you had encountered some peripatetic siren." "Will you hold your tongue, if my wife were to hear you," said the Professor. "This wife of mine, it is jealous." "Ah! That Brichot," cried Ski, moved to traditional merriment by Brichot's spicy witticism, "he is always the same;" albeit he had no reason to suppose that the university don had ever indulged in obscenity. And, to embellish this consecrated utterance with the ritual gesture, he made as though he could not resist the desire to pinch Brichot's leg. "He never changes, the rascal," Ski went on, and without stopping to think of the effect, at once tragic and

comic, that the don's semi-blindness gave to his words: "Always a sharp look-out for the ladies." "You see," said M. de Cambremer, "what it is to meet with a scholar. Here have I been shooting for fifteen years in the forest of Chantepie, and I've never even thought of what the name meant." Mme. de Cambremer cast a stern glance at her husband; she did not like him to humble himself thus before Brichot. She was even more annoyed when, at every "ready-made" expression that Cancan employed, Cottard, who knew the ins and outs of them all, having himself laboriously acquired them, pointed out to the Marquis, who admitted his stupidity, that they meant nothing: "Why 'stupid as a cabbage?' Do you suppose cabbages are stupider than anything else? You say: 'repeat the same thing thirty-six times.' Why thirty-six? Why do you say: 'sleep like a top?' Why 'Thunder of Brest?' Why 'play four hundred tricks?'" But at this, the defence of M. de Cambremer was taken up by Brichot who explained the origin of each of these expressions. But Mme. de Cambremer was occupied principally in examining the changes that the Verdurins had introduced at la Raspelière, in order that she might be able to criticise some, and import others, or possibly the same ones, to Féterne. "I keep wondering what that lustre is that's hanging all crooked. I can hardly recognise my old Raspelière," she went on, with a familiarly aristocratic air, as she might have spoken of an old servant meaning not so much to indicate his age as to say that she had seen him in his cradle. And, as she was a trifle bookish in her speech: "All the same," she added in an undertone, "I can't help feeling that if I were inhabiting another person's house, I should feel some com-

punction about altering everything like this." "It is a pity you didn't come with them," said Mme. Verdurin to M. de Charlus and Morel, hoping that M. de Charlus was now "enrolled" and would submit to the rule that they must all arrive by the same train. "You are sure that Chantepie means the singing magpie, Chochotte?" she went on, to shew that, like the great hostess that she was, she could join in every conversation at the same time. "Tell me something about this violinist," Mme. de Cambremer said to me, "he interests me; I adore music, and it seems to me that I have heard of him before, complete my education." She had heard that Morel had come with M. de Charlus and hoped, by getting the former to come to her house, to make friends with the latter. She added, however, so that I might not guess her reason for asking, "M. Brichot, too, interests me." For, even if she was highly cultivated, just as certain persons inclined to obesity eat hardly anything, and take exercise all day long without ceasing to grow visibly fatter, so Mme. de Cambremer might in vain master, and especially at Féterne, a philosophy that became ever more esoteric, music that became ever more subtle, she emerged from these studies only to weave plots that would enable her to cut the middle-class friends of her girlhood and to form the connexions which she had originally supposed to be part of the social life of her "in laws," and had then discovered to be far more exalted and remote. A philosopher who was not modern enough for her, Leibnitz, has said that the way is long from the intellect to the heart. This way Mme. de Cambremer had been no more capable than her brother of traversing. Abandoning the study of John Stuart Mill only for that of Lachelier, the less she believed

in the reality of the external world, the more desperately she sought to establish herself, before she died, in a good position in it. In her passion for realism in art, no object seemed to her humble enough to serve as a model to painter or writer. A fashionable picture or novel would have made her feel sick; Tolstoi's mujiks, or Millet's peasants, were the extreme social boundary beyond which she did not allow the artist to pass. But to cross the boundary that limited her own social relations, to raise herself to an intimate acquaintance with Duchesses, this was the goal of all her efforts, so ineffective had the spiritual treatment to which she subjected herself, by the study of great masterpieces, proved in overcoming the congenital and morbid snobbishness that had developed in her. This snobbishness had even succeeded in curing certain tendencies to avarice and adultery to which in her younger days she had been inclined, just as certain peculiar and permanent pathological conditions seem to render those who are subject to them immune to other maladies. I could not, all the same, refrain, as I listened to her, from giving her credit, without deriving any pleasure from them, for the refinement of her expressions. They were those that are used, at a given date, by all the people of the same intellectual breadth, so that the refined expression provides us at once, like the arc of a circle, with the means to describe and limit the entire circumference. And so the effect of these expressions is that the people who employ them bore me immediately, because I feel that I already know them, but are generally regarded as superior persons, and have often been offered me as delightful and unappreciated companions. "You cannot fail to be aware, Madame, that many forest

regions take their name from the animals that inhabit them. Next to the forest of Chantepie, you have the wood Chantereine." "I don't know who the queen may be, but you are not very polite to her," said M. de Cambremer. "One for you, Chochotte," said Mme. de Verdurin. "And apart from that, did you have a pleasant journey?" "We encountered only vague human beings who thronged the train. But I must answer M. de Cambremer's question; *reine,* in this instance, is not the wife of a king, but a frog. It is the name that the frog has long retained in this district, as is shewn by the station, Renneville, which ought to be spelt Reineville." "I say, that seems a fine animal," said M. de Cambremer to Mme. Verdurin, pointing to a fish. (It was one of the compliments by means of which he considered that he paid his scot at a dinner-party, and gave an immediate return of hospitality. "There is no need to invite them," he would often say, in speaking of one or other couple of their friends to his wife. "They were delighted to have us. It was they that thanked me for coming.) I must tell you, all the same, that I have been going every day for years to Renneville, and I have never seen any more frogs there than anywhere else. Madame de Cambremer brought the curé here from a parish where she owns a considerable property, who has very much the same turn of mind as yourself, it seems to me. He has written a book." "I know, I have read it with immense interest," Brichot replied hypocritically. The satisfaction that his pride received indirectly from this answer made M. de Cambremer laugh long and loud. "Ah! well, the author of, what shall I say, this geography, this glossary, dwells at great length upon the name of a little

place of which we were formerly, if I may say so, the Lords, and which is called Pont-à-Couleuvre. Of course I am only an ignorant rustic compared with such a fountain of learning, but I have been to Pont-à-Couleuvre a thousand times if he's been there once, and devil take me if I ever saw one of his beastly serpents there, I say beastly, in spite of the tribute the worthy La Fontaine pays them." (*The Man and the Serpent* was one of his two fables.) "You have not seen any, and you have been quite right," replied Brichot. "Undoubtedly, the writer you mention knows his subject through and through, he has written a remarkable book." "There!" exclaimed Mme. de Cambremer, "that book, there's no other word for it, is a regular Benedictine *opus*." "No doubt he has consulted various polyptychs (by which we mean the lists of benefices and cures of each diocese), which may have furnished him with the names of lay patrons and ecclesiastical collators. But there are other sources. One of the most learned of my friends has delved into them. He found that the place in question was named Pont-à-Quileuvre. This odd name encouraged him to carry his researches farther, to a Latin text in which the bridge that your friend supposes to be infested with serpents is styled *Pons cui aperit:* A closed bridge that was opened only upon due payment." "You were speaking of frogs. I, when I find myself among such learned folk, feel like the frog before the areopagus," (this being his other fable), said Cancan who often indulged, with a hearty laugh, in this pleasantry thanks to which he imagined himself to be making, at one and the same time, out of humility and with aptness, a profession of ignorance and a display of learning. As for Cottard,

blocked upon one side by M. de Charlus's silence, and driven to seek an outlet elsewhere, he turned to me with one of those questions which so impressed his patients when it hit the mark and shewed them that he could put himself so to speak inside their bodies; if on the other hand it missed the mark, it enabled him to check certain theories, to widen his previous point of view. "When you come to a relatively high altitude, such as this where we now are, do you find that the change increases your tendency to choking fits?" he asked me with the certainty of either arousing admiration or enlarging his own knowledge. M. de Cambremer heard the question and smiled. "I can't tell you how amused I am to hear that you have choking fits," he flung at me across the table. He did not mean that it made him happy, though as a matter of fact it did. For this worthy man could not hear any reference to another person's sufferings without a feeling of satisfaction and a spasm of hilarity which speedily gave place to the instinctive pity of a kind heart. But his words had another meaning which was indicated more precisely by the clause that followed: "It amuses me," he explained, "because my sister has them too." And indeed it did amuse him, as it would have amused him to hear me mention as one of my friends a person who was constantly coming to their house. "How small the world is," was the reflexion which he formed mentally and which I saw written upon his smiling face when Cottard spoke to me of my choking fits. And these began to establish themselves, from the evening of this dinner-party, as a sort of interest in common, after which M. de Cambremer never failed to inquire, if only to hand on a report to his sister. As I answered the questions with

which his wife kept plying me about Morel, my thoughts returned to a conversation I had had with my mother that afternoon. Having, without any attempt to dissuade me from going to the Verdurins' if there was a chance of my being amused there, suggested that it was a house of which my grandfather would not have approved, which would have made him exclaim: "On guard!" my mother had gone on to say: "Listen, Judge Toureuil and his wife told me they had been to luncheon with Mme. Bontemps. They asked me no questions. But I seemed to gather from what was said that your marriage to Albertine would be the joy of her aunt's life. I think the real reason is that they are all extremely fond of you. At the same time the style in which they suppose that you would be able to keep her, the sort of friends they more or less know that we have, all that is not, I fancy, left out of account, although it may be a minor consideration. I should not have mentioned it to you myself, because I attach no importance to it, but as I imagine that people will mention it to you, I prefer to get a word in first." "But you yourself, what do you think of her?" I asked my mother. "Well, it's not I that am going to marry her. You might certainly do a thousand times better. But I feel that your grandmother would not have liked me to influence you. As a matter of fact, I cannot tell you what I think of Albertine; I don't think of her. I shall say to you, like Madame de Sévigné: 'She has good qualities, at least I suppose so. But at this first stage I can praise her only by negatives. One thing she is not, she has not the Rennes accent. In time, I shall perhaps say, she is something else. And I shall always think well of her if she can make you happy.'" But by these

very words which left it to myself to decide my own happiness, my mother had plunged me in that state of doubt in which I had been plunged long ago when, my father having allowed me to go to *Phèdre* and, what was more, to take to writing, I had suddenly felt myself burdened with too great a responsibility, the fear of distressing him, and that melancholy which we feel when we cease to obey orders which, from one day to another, keep the future hidden, and realise that we have at last begun to live in real earnest, as a grown-up person, the life, the only life that any of us has at his disposal.

Perhaps the best thing would be to wait a little longer, to begin by regarding Albertine as in the past, so as to find out whether I really loved her. I might take her, as a distraction, to see the Verdurins, and this thought reminded me that I had come there myself that evening only to learn whether Mme. Putbus was staying there or was expected. In any case, she was not dining with them. "Speaking of your friend Saint-Loup," said Mme. de Cambremer, using an expression which shewed a closer sequence in her ideas than her remarks might have led one to suppose, for if she spoke to me about music she was thinking about the Guermantes; "you know that everybody is talking about his marriage to the niece of the Princesse de Guermantes. I may tell you that, so far as I am concerned, all that society gossip leaves me cold." I was seized by a fear that I might have spoken unfeelingly to Robert about the girl in question, a girl full of sham originality, whose mind was as mediocre as her actions were violent. Hardly ever do we hear anything that does not make us regret something that we have said. I replied to Mme. de Cambremer, truthfully

as it happened, that I knew nothing about it, and that anyhow I thought that the girl was still too young to be engaged. "That is perhaps why it is not yet official, anyhow there is a lot of talk about it." "I ought to warn you," Mme. Verdurin observed dryly to Mme. de Cambremer, having heard her talking to me about Morel and supposing, when Mme. de Cambremer lowered her voice to speak of Saint-Loup's engagement, that Morel was still under discussion. "You needn't expect any light music here. In matters of art, you know, the faithful who come to my Wednesdays, my children as I call them, are all fearfully advanced," she added with an air of proud terror. "I say to them sometimes: My dear people, you move too fast for your Mistress, not that she has ever been said to be afraid of anything daring. Every year it goes a little farther; I can see the day coming when they will have no more use for Wagner or Indy." "But it is splendid to be advanced, one can never be advanced enough," said Mme. de Cambremer, scrutinising as she spoke every corner of the dining-room, trying to identify the things that her mother-in-law had left there, those that Mme. Verdurin had brought with her, and to convict the latter red-handed of want of taste. At the same time, she tried to get me to talk of the subject that interested her most, M. de Charlus. She thought it touching that he should be looking after a violinist. "He seems intelligent." "Why, his mind is extremely active for a man of his age," said I. "Age? But he doesn't seem at all old, look, the hair is still young." (For, during the last three or four years, the word hair had been used with the article by one of those unknown persons who launch the literary fashions, and everybody at the same

radius from the centre as Mme. de Cambremer would say "the hair," not without an affected smile. At the present day, people still say "the hair" but, from an excessive use of the article, the pronoun will be born again.) "What interests me most about M. de Charlus," she went on, "is that one can feel that he has the gift. I may tell you that I attach little importance to knowledge. Things that can be learned do not interest me." This speech was not incompatible with Mme. de Cambremer's own distinction which was, in the fullest sense, imitated and acquired. But it so happened that one of the things which one had to know at that moment was that knowledge is nothing, and is not worth a straw when compared with originality. Mme. de Cambremer had learned, with everything else, that one ought not to learn anything. "That is why," she explained to me, "Brichot, who has an interesting side to him, for I am not one to despise a certain savoury erudition, interests me far less." But Brichot, at that moment, was occupied with one thing only; hearing people talk about music, he trembled lest the subject should remind Mme. Verdurin of the death of Dechambre. He decided to say something that would avert that harrowing memory. M. de Cambremer provided him with an opportunity with the question: "You mean to say that wooded places always take their names from animals?" "Not at all," replied Brichot, proud to display his learning before so many strangers, among whom, I had told him, he would be certain to interest one at least. "We have only to consider how often, even in the names of people, a tree is preserved, like a fern in a piece of coal. One of our Conscript Fathers is called M. de Saulces de Freycinet, which means, if I be not mis-

taken, a spot planted with willows and ashes, *salix et fraxinetum;* his nephew M. de Selves combines more trees still, since he is named de Selves, *de sylvis.*" Saniette was delighted to see the conversation take so animated a turn. He could, since Brichot was talking all the time, preserve a silence which would save him from being the butt of M. and Mme. Verdurin's wit. And growing even more sensitive in his joy at being set free, he had been touched when he heard M. Verdurin, notwithstanding the formality of so grand a dinner-party, tell the butler to put a decanter of water in front of M. Saniette who never drank anything else. (The generals responsible for the death of most soldiers insist upon their being well fed.) Moreover, Mme. Verdurin had actually smiled once at Saniette. Decidedly, they were kind people. He was not going to be tortured any more. At this moment the meal was interrupted by one of the party whom I have forgotten to mention, an eminent Norwegian philosopher who spoke French very well but very slowly, for the twofold reason that, in the first place, having learned the language only recently and not wishing to make mistakes (he did, nevertheless, make some), he referred each word to a sort of mental dictionary, and secondly, being a metaphysician, he always thought of what he intended to say while he was saying it, which, even in a Frenchman, causes slowness of utterance. He was, otherwise, a charming person, although similar in appearance to many other people, save in one respect. This man so slow in his diction (there was an interval of silence after every word) acquired a startling rapidity in escaping from the room as soon as he had said good-bye. His haste made

one suppose, the first time one saw him, that he was suffering from colic or some even more urgent need.

"My dear—colleague," he said to Brichot, after deliberating in his mind whether colleague was the correct term, "I have a sort of—desire to know whether there are other trees in the—nomenclature of your beautiful French—Latin—Norman tongue. Madame" (he meant Madame Verdurin, although he dared not look at her) "has told me that you know everything. Is not this precisely the moment?" "No, it is the moment for eating," interrupted Mme. Verdurin, who saw the dinner becoming interminable. "Very well," the Scandinavian replied, bowing his head over his plate with a resigned and sorrowful smile. "But I must point out to Madame that if I have permitted myself this questionnaire—pardon me, this questation—it is because I have to return to-morrow to Paris to dine at the Tour d'Argent or at the Hôtel Meurice. My French—brother—M. Boutroux is to address us there about certain seances of spiritualism—pardon me, certain spirituous evocations which he has controlled." "The Tour d'Argent is not nearly as good as they make out," said Mme. Verdurin sourly. "In fact, I have had some disgusting dinners there." "But am I mistaken, is not the food that one consumes at Madame's table an example of the finest French cookery?" "Well, it is not positively bad," replied Mme. Verdurin, sweetening. "And if you come next Wednesday, it will be better." "But I am leaving on Monday for Algiers, and from there I am going to the Cape. And when I am at the Cape of Good Hope, I shall no longer be able to meet my illustrious colleague—pardon me, I shall no longer be able to meet my brother." And he set to work obedi-

ently, after offering these retrospective apologies, to devour his food at a headlong pace. But Brichot was only too delighted to be able to furnish other vegetable etymologies, and replied, so greatly interesting the Norwegian that he again stopped eating, but with a sign to the servants that they might remove his plate and help him to the next course. "One of the Forty," said Brichot, "is named Houssaye, or a place planted with hollies; in the name of a brilliant diplomat, d'Ormesson, you will find the elm, the *ulmus* beloved of Virgil, which has given its name to the town of Ulm; in the names of his colleagues, M. de la Boulaye, the birch (*bouleau*); M. d'Aunay, the alder (*aune*), M. de Bussière, the box (*buis*), M. Albaret, the sapwood (*aubier*)," (I made a mental note that I must tell this to Céleste) "M. de Cholet, the cabbage (*chou*), and the apple-tree (*pommier*) in the name of M. de la Pommeraye, whose lectures we used to attend, do you remember, Saniette, in the days when the worthy Porel had been sent to the farthest ends of the earth, as Proconsul in Odeonia?" "You said that Cholet was derived from *chou*," I remarked to Brichot. "Am I to suppose that the name of a station I passed before reaching Doncières, Saint-Frichoux, comes from *chou* also?" "No, Saint-Frichoux is *Sanctus Fructuosus*, as *Sanctus Ferreolus* gave rise to Saint-Fargeau, but that is not Norman in the least." "He knows too much, he's borling us," the Princess muttered softly. "There are so many other names that interest me, but I can't ask you everything at once." And, turning to Cottard, "Is Madame Putbus here?" I asked him. On hearing Brichot utter the name of Saniette, M. Verdurin cast at his wife and at Cottard an ironical glance which confounded their timid

guest. "No, thank heaven," replied Mme. Verdurin, who had overheard my question, "I have managed to turn her thoughts in the direction of Venice, we are rid of her for this year." "I shall myself be entitled presently to two trees," said M. de Charlus, "for I have more or less taken a little house between Saint-Martin-du-Chêne and Saint-Pierre-des-Ifs." "But that is quite close to here, I hope that you will come over often with Charlie Morel. You have only to come to an arrangement with our little group about the trains, you are only a step from Doncières," said Mme. Verdurin, who hated people's not coming by the same train and not arriving at the hours when she sent carriages to meet them. She knew how stiff the climb was to la Raspelière, even if you took the zigzag path, behind Féterne, which was half-an-hour longer; she was afraid that those of her guests who kept to themselves might not find carriages to take them, or even, having in reality stayed away, might plead the excuse that they had not found a carriage at Douville-Féterne, and had not felt strong enough to make so stiff a climb on foot. To this invitation M. de Charlus responded with a silent bow. "He's not the sort of person you can talk to any day of the week, he seems a tough customer," the doctor whispered to Ski, for having remained quite simple, notwithstanding a surface-dressing of pride, he made no attempt to conceal the fact that Charlus had snubbed him. "He is doubtless unaware that at all the watering-places, and even in Paris in the wards, the physicians, who naturally regard me as their 'chief,' make it a point of honour to introduce me to all the noblemen present, not that they need to be asked twice. It makes my stay at the spas quite enjoy-

able," he added carelessly. "Indeed at Doncières the medical officer of the regiment, who is the doctor who attends the Colonel, invited me to luncheon to meet him, saying that I was fully entitled to dine with the General. And that General is a Monsieur *de* something. I don't know whether his title-deeds are more or less ancient than those of this Baron." "Don't you worry about him, his is a very humble coronet," replied Ski in an undertone, and added some vague statement including a word of which I caught only the last syllable, *-ast,* being engaged in listening to what Brichot was saying to M. de Charlus. "No, as for that, I am sorry to say, you have probably one tree only, for if Saint-Martin-du-Chêne is obviously *Sanctus Martinus juxta quercum,* on the other hand, the word *if* may be simply the root *ave, eve,* which means moist, as in Aveyron, Lodève, Yvette, and which you see survive in our kitchen-sinks (*éviers*). It is the word *eau* which in Breton is represented by *ster,* Stermaria, Sterlaer, Sterbouest, Ster-en-Dreuchen." I heard no more, for whatever the pleasure I might feel on hearing again the name Stermaria, I could not help listening to Cottard, near whom I was seated, as he murmured to Ski: "Indeed! I was not aware of it. So he is a gentleman who has the *mens conscia recti!* He is one of the happy band, is he? He hasn't got rings of fat round his eyes, all the same. I shall have to keep my feet well under me, or he may start squeezing them. But I'm not at all surprised. I am used to seeing noblemen in the bath, in their birthday suits, they are all more or less degenerates. I don't talk to them, because after all I am in an official position and it might do me harm. But they know quite well who I am." Saniette, whom Brichot's appeal had

frightened, was beginning to breathe again, like a man who is afraid of the storm when he finds that the lightning has not been followed by any sound of thunder, when he heard M. Verdurin interrogate him, fastening upon him a stare which did not spare the wretch until he had finished speaking, so as to put him at once out of countenance and prevent him from recovering his composure. "But you never told us that you went to those *matinées* at the Odéon, Saniette?" Trembling like a recruit before a bullying serjeant, Saniette replied, making his speech as diminutive as possible, so that it might have a better chance of escaping the blow: "Only once, to the *Chercheuse*." "What's that he says?" shouted M. Verdurin, with an air of disgust and fury combined, knitting his brows as though it was all he could do to grasp something unintelligible. "It is impossible to understand what you say, what have you got in your mouth?" inquired M. Verdurin, growing more and more furious, and alluding to Saniette's defective speech. "Poor Saniette, I won't have him made unhappy," said Mme. Verdurin in a tone of false pity, so as to leave no one in doubt as to her husband's insolent intention. "I was at the Ch... Che..." "Che, che, try to speak distinctly," said M. Verdurin, "I can't understand a word you say." Almost without exception, the faithful burst out laughing and they suggested a band of cannibals in whom the sight of a wound on a white man's skin has aroused the thirst for blood. For the instinct of imitation and absence of courage govern society and the mob alike. And we all of us laugh at a person whom we see being made fun of, which does not prevent us from venerating him ten years later in a circle where he is admired. It is in like man-

ner that the populace banishes or acclaims its kings. "Come, now, it is not his fault," said Mme. Verdurin. "It is not mine either, people ought not to dine out if they can't speak properly." "I was at the *Chercheuse d'Esprit* by Favart." "What! It's the *Chercheuse d'Esprit* that you call the *Chercheuse?* Why, that's marvellous! I might have tried for a hundred years without guessing it," cried M. Verdurin, who all the same would have decided immediately that you were not literary, were not artistic, were not "one of us," if he had heard you quote the full title of certain works. For instance, one was expected to say the *Malade,* the *Bourgeois;* and whoso would have added *imaginaire* or *gentilhomme* would have shewn that he did not understand "shop," just as in a drawing-room a person proves that he is not in society by saying "M. de Montesquiou-Fézensac" instead of "M. de Montesquiou." "But it is not so extraordinary," said Saniette, breathless with emotion but smiling, albeit he was in no smiling mood. Mme. Verdurin could not contain herself: "Yes, indeed!" she cried with a titter. "You may be quite sure that nobody would ever have guessed that you meant the *Chercheuse d'Esprit.*" M. Verdurin went on in a gentler tone, addressing both Saniette and Brichot: "It is quite a pretty piece, all the same, the *Chercheuse d'Esprit.*" Uttered in a serious tone, this simple phrase, in which one could detect no trace of malice, did Saniette as much good and aroused in him as much gratitude as a deliberate compliment. He was unable to utter a single word and preserved a happy silence. Brichot was more loquacious. "It is true," he replied to M. Verdurin, "and if it could be passed off as the work of some Sarmatian or Scandina-

vian author, we might put forward the *Chercheuse d'Esprit* as a candidate for the vacant post of masterpiece. But, be it said without any disrespect to the shade of the gentle Favart, he had not the Ibsenian temperament." (Immediately he blushed to the roots of his hair, remembering the Norwegian philosopher who appeared troubled because he was seeking in vain to discover what vegetable the *buis* might be that Brichot had cited a little earlier in connexion with the name Bussière.) "However, now that Porel's satrapy is filled by a functionary who is a Tolstoist of rigorous observance, it may come to pass that we shall witness *Anna Karenina* or *Resurrection* beneath the Odeonian architrave." "I know the portrait of Favart to which you allude," said M. de Charlus. "I have seen a very fine print of it at Comtesse Molé's." The name of Comtesse Molé made a great impression upon Mme. Verdurin. "Oh! So you go to Mme. de Molé's!" she exclaimed. She supposed that people said Comtesse Molé, Madame Molé, simply as an abbreviation, as she heard people say "the Rohans" or in contempt, as she herself said: "Madame la Trémoïlle." She had no doubt that Comtesse Molé, who knew the Queen of Greece and the Principessa di Caprarola, had as much right as anybody to the particle, and for once in a way had decided to bestow it upon so brilliant a personage, and one who had been extremely civil to herself. And so, to make it clear that she had spoken thus on purpose and did not grudge the Comtesse her "de," she went on: "But I had no idea that you knew Madame de Molé!" as though it had been doubly extraordinary, both that M. de Charlus should know the lady, and that Mme. Verdurin should not know that he knew

her. Now society, or at least the people to whom M. de Charlus gave that name, forms a relatively homogeneous and compact whole. And so it is comprehensible that, in the incongruous vastness of the middle classes, a barrister may say to somebody who knows one of his school friends: "But how in the world do you come to know him?" whereas to be surprised at a Frenchman's knowing the meaning of the word *temple* or *forest* would be hardly more extraordinary than to wonder at the hazards that might have brought together M. de Charlus and the Comtesse Molé. What is more, even if such an acquaintance had not been derived quite naturally from the laws that govern society, how could there be anything strange in the fact of Mme. Verdurin's not knowing of it, since she was meeting M. de Charlus for the first time, and his relations with Mme. Molé were far from being the only thing that she did not know with regard to him, about whom, to tell the truth, she knew nothing. "Who was it that played this *Chercheuse d'Esprit*, my good Saniette?" asked M. Verdurin. Albeit he felt that the storm had passed, the old antiquarian hesitated before answering. "There you go," said Mme. Verdurin, "you frighten him, you make fun of everything that he says, and then you expect him to answer. Come along, tell us who played the part, and you shall have some galantine to take home," said Mme. Verdurin, making a cruel allusion to the penury into which Saniette had plunged himself by trying to rescue the family of a friend. "I can remember only that it was Mme. Samary who played the Zerbine," said Saniette. "The Zerbine? What in the world is that," M. Verdurin shouted, as though the house were on fire. "It is one of the parts in the old repertory, like

Captain Fracasse, as who should say the Fire-eater, the Pedant." "Ah, the pedant, that's yourself. The Zerbine! No, really the man's mad," exclaimed M. Verdurin. Mme. Verdurin looked at her guests and laughed as though to apologise for Saniette. "The Zerbine, he imagines that everybody will know at once what it means. You are like M. de Longepierre, the stupidest man I know, who said to us quite calmly the other day 'the Banat.' Nobody had any idea what he meant. Finally we were informed that it was a province in Serbia." To put an end to Saniette's torture, which hurt me more than it hurt him, I asked Brichot if he knew what the word Balbec meant. "Balbec is probably a corruption of Dalbec," he told me. "One would have to consult the charters of the Kings of England, Overlords of Normandy, for Balbec was held of the Barony of Dover, for which reason it was often styled Balbec d'Outre-Mer, Balbec-en-Terre. But the Barony of Dover was itself held of the Bishopric of Bayeux, and, notwithstanding the rights that were temporarily enjoyed in the abbey by the Templars, from the time of Louis d'Harcourt, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Bishop of Bayeux, it was the Bishops of that diocese who collated to the benefice of Balbec. So it was explained to me by the incumbent of Douville, a bald person, eloquent, fantastic, and a devotee of the table, who lives by the Rule of Brillat-Savarin, and who expounded to me in slightly sibylline language a loose pedagogy, while he fed me upon some admirable fried potatoes." While Brichot smiled to shew how witty it was to combine matters so dissimilar and to employ an ironically lofty diction in treating of commonplace things, Saniette was trying to find a loophole for some clever re-

mark which would raise him from the abyss into which he had fallen. The witty remark was what was known as a "comparison," but had changed its form, for there is an evolution in wit as in literary styles, an epidemic that disappears has its place taken by another, and so forth. . . . At one time the typical "comparison" was the "height of. . . ." But this was out of date, no one used it any more, there was only Cottard left to say still, on occasion, in the middle of a game of piquet: "Do you know what is the height of absent-mindedness, it is to think that the Edict (*l'édit*) of Nantes was an Englishwoman." These "heights" had been replaced by nicknames. In reality it was still the old "comparison," but, as the nickname was in fashion, people did not observe the survival. Unfortunately for Saniette, when these "comparisons" were not his own, and as a rule were unknown to the little nucleus, he produced them so timidly that, notwithstanding the laugh with which he followed them up to indicate their humorous nature, nobody saw the point. And if on the other hand the joke was his own, as he had generally hit upon it in conversation with one of the faithful, and the latter had repeated it, appropriating the authorship, the joke was in that case known, but not as being Saniette's. And so when he slipped in one of these it was recognised, but, because he was its author, he was accused of plagiarism. "Very well, then," Brichot continued, "Bec, in Norman, is a stream; there is the Abbey of Bec, Mobec, the stream from the marsh (Mor or Mer meant a marsh, as in Morville, or in Bricquemar, Alvimare, Cambremer), Bricquebec the stream from the high ground coming from Briga, a fortified place, as in Bricqueville, Bricquebose, le Bric, Briand,

or indeed Brice, bridge, which is the same as *bruck* in German (Innsbruck), and as the English *bridge* which ends so many place-names (Cambridge, for instance). You have moreover in Normandy many other instances of bec: Caudebec, Bolbec, le Robec, le Bec-Hellouin, Becquerel. It is the Norman form of the German *bach,* Offenbach, Anspach. Varaguebec, from the old word *varaigne,* equivalent to *warren,* preserved woods or ponds. As for Dal," Brichot went on, "it is a form of *thal,* a valley: Darnetal, Rosendal, and indeed, close to Louviers, Becdal. The river that has given its name to Balbec, is, by the way, charming. Seen from a *falaise* (*fels* in German, you have indeed, not far from here, standing on a height, the picturesque town of Falaise), it runs close under the spires of the church, which is actually a long way from it, and seems to be reflecting them." "I should think so," said I, "that is an effect that Elstir admires greatly. I have seen several sketches of it in his studio." "Elstir! You know Tiche?" cried Mme. Verdurin. "But do you know that we used to be the dearest friends. Thank heaven, I never see him now. No, but ask Cottard, Brichot, he used to have his place laid at my table, he came every day. Now, there's a man of whom you can say that it has done him no good to leave our little nucleus. I shall shew you presently some flowers he painted for me; you shall see the difference from the things he is doing now, which I don't care for at all, not at all! Why! I made him do me a portrait of Cottard, not to mention all the sketches he has made of me." "And he gave the Professor purple hair," said Mme. Cottard, forgetting that at the time her husband had not been even a Fellow of the College. "I don't

know, Sir, whether you find that my husband has purple hair." "That doesn't matter," said Mme. Verdurin, raising her chin with an air of contempt for Mme. Cottard and of admiration for the man of whom she was speaking, "he was a brave colourist, a fine painter. Whereas," she added, turning again to myself, "I don't know whether you call it painting, all those huge she-devils of composition, those vast structures he exhibits now that he has given up coming to me. For my part, I call it daubing, it's all so hackneyed, and besides, it lacks relief, personality. It's anybody's work." "He revives the grace of the eighteenth century, but in a modern form," Saniette broke out, fortified and reassured by my affability. "But I prefer Helleu." "He's not in the least like Helleu," said Mme. Verdurin. "Yes, he has the fever of the eighteenth century. He's a steam Watteau," and he began to laugh. "Old, old as the hills, I've had that served up to me for years," said M. Verdurin, to whom indeed Ski had once repeated the remark, but as his own invention. "It's unfortunate that when once in a way you say something quite amusing and make it intelligible, it is not your own." "I'm sorry about it," Mme. Verdurin went on, "because he was really gifted, he has wasted a charming temperament for painting. Ah! if he had stayed with us! Why, he would have become the greatest landscape painter of our day. And it is a woman that has dragged him down so low! Not that that surprises me, for he was a pleasant enough man, but common. At bottom, he was a mediocrity. I may tell you that I felt it at once. Really, he never interested me. I was very fond of him, that was all. For one thing, he was so dirty. Tell me, do you, now, really like

people who never wash?" "What is this charmingly coloured thing that we are eating?" asked Ski. "It is called strawberry mousse," said Mme. Verdurin. "But it is ex-qui-site. You ought to open bottles of Château-Margaux, Château-Lafite, port wine." "I can't tell you how he amuses me, he never drinks anything but water," said Mme. Verdurin, seeking to cloak with her delight at such a flight of fancy her alarm at the thought of so prodigal an outlay. "But not to drink," Ski went on, "you shall fill all our glasses, they will bring in marvellous peaches, huge nectarines, there against the sunset; it will be as gorgeous as a fine Veronese." "It would cost almost as much," M. Verdurin murmured. "But take away those cheeses with their hideous colour," said Ski, trying to snatch the plate from before his host, who defended his gruyère with his might and main. "You can realise that I don't regret Elstir," Mme. Verdurin said to me, "that one is far more gifted. Elstir is simply hard work, the man who can't make himself give up painting when he would like to. He is the good student, the slavish competitor. Ski, now, only follows his own fancy. You will see him light a cigarette in the middle of dinner." "After all, I can't see why you wouldn't invite his wife," said Cottard, "he would be with us still." "Will you mind what you're saying, please, I don't open my doors to street-walkers, Monsieur le Professeur," said Mme. Verdurin, who had, on the contrary, done everything in her power to make Elstir return, even with his wife. But before they were married she had tried to make them quarrel, had told Elstir that the woman he loved was stupid, dirty, immoral, a thief. For once in a way she had failed to effect a breach. It was with the Verdurin

salon that Elstir had broken; and he was glad of it, as converts bless the illness or misfortune that has withdrawn them from the world and has made them learn the way of salvation. "He really is magnificent, the Professor," she said. "Why not declare outright that I keep a disorderly house. Anyone would think you didn't know what Madame Elstir was like. I would sooner have the lowest street-walker at my table! Oh no, I don't stand for that sort of thing. Besides I may tell you that it would have been stupid of me to overlook the wife, when the husband no longer interests me, he is out of date, he can't even draw." "That is extraordinary in a man of his intelligence," said Cottard. "Oh, no!" replied Mme. Verdurin, "even at the time when he had talent, for he had it, the wretch, and to spare, what was tiresome about him was that he had not a spark of intelligence." Mme. Verdurin, in passing this judgment upon Elstir, had not waited for their quarrel, or until she had ceased to care for his painting. The fact was that, even at the time when he formed part of the little group, it would happen that Elstir spent the whole day in the company of some woman whom, rightly or wrongly, Mme. Verdurin considered a goose, which, in her opinion, was not the conduct of an intelligent man. "No," she observed with an air of finality, "I consider that his wife and he are made for one another. Heaven knows, there isn't a more boring creature on the face of the earth, and I should go mad if I had to spend a couple of hours with her. But people say that he finds her very intelligent. There's no use denying it, our Tiche was *extremely stupid.* I have seen him bowled over by people you can't conceive, worthy idiots we should never have allowed into our little

clan. Well! He wrote to them, he argued with them, he, Elstir! That doesn't prevent his having charming qualities, oh, charming and deliciously absurd, naturally." For Mme. Verdurin was convinced that men who are truly remarkable are capable of all sorts of follies. A false idea in which there is nevertheless a grain of truth. Certainly, people's follies are insupportable. But a want of balance which we discover only in course of time is the consequence of the entering into a human brain of delicacies for which it is not regularly adapted. So that the oddities of charming people exasperate us, but there are few if any charming people who are not, at the same time, odd. "Look, I shall be able to shew you his flowers now," she said to me, seeing that her husband was making signals to her to rise. And she took M. de Cambremer's arm again. M. Verdurin tried to apologise for this to M. de Charlus, as soon as he had got rid of Mme. de Cambremer, and to give him his reasons, chiefly for the pleasure of discussing these social refinements with a gentleman of title, momentarily the inferior of those who assigned to him the place to which they considered him entitled. But first of all he was anxious to make it clear to M. de Charlus that intellectually he esteemed him too highly to suppose that he could pay any attention to these trivialities. "Excuse my mentioning so small a point," he began, "for I can understand how little such things mean to you. Middle-class minds pay attention to them, but the others, the artists, the people who are really of our sort, don't give a rap for them. Now, from the first words we exchanged, I realised that you were one of us!" M. de Charlus, who gave a widely different meaning to this expression, drew himself erect. After the doctor's

oglings, he found his host's insulting frankness suffocating. "Don't protest, my dear Sir, you are one of us, it is plain as daylight," replied M. Verdurin. "Observe that I have no idea whether you practise any of the arts, but that is not necessary. It is not always sufficient. Dechambre, who has just died, played exquisitely, with the most vigorous execution, but he was not one of us, you felt at once that he was not one of us. Brichot is not one of us. Morel is, my wife is, I can feel that you are. . . ." "What were you going to tell me?" interrupted M. de Charlus, who was beginning to feel reassured as to M. Verdurin's meaning, but preferred that he should not utter these misleading remarks quite so loud. "Only that we put you on the left," replied M. Verdurin. M. de Charlus, with a comprehending, genial, insolent smile, replied: "Why! That is not of the slightest importance, *here!*" And he gave a little laugh that was all his own—a laugh that came to him probably from some Bavarian or Lorraine grandmother, who herself had inherited it, in identical form, from an ancestress, so that it had been sounding now, without change, for not a few centuries in little old-fashioned European courts, and one could relish its precious quality like that of certain old musical instruments that have now grown rare. There are times when, to paint a complete portrait of some one, we should have to add a phonetic imitation to our verbal description, and our portrait of the figure that M. de Charlus presented is liable to remain incomplete in the absence of that little laugh, so delicate, so light, just as certain compositions are never accurately rendered because our orchestras lack those "small trumpets," with a sound so entirely their own, for which the composer wrote

this or that part. "But," M. Verdurin explained, stung by his laugh, "we did it on purpose. I attach no importance whatever to titles of nobility," he went on, with that contemptuous smile which I have seen so many people whom I have known, unlike my grandmother and my mother, assume when they spoke of anything that they did not possess, before others who thus, they supposed, would be prevented from using that particular advantage to crow over them. "But, don't you see, since we happened to have M. de Cambremer here, and he is a Marquis, while you are only a Baron. . . ." "Pardon me," M. de Charlus replied with an arrogant air to the astonished Verdurin, "I am also Duc de Brabant, Damoiseau de Montargis, Prince d'Oléron, de Carency, de Viareggio and des Dunes. However, it is not of the slightest importance. Please do not distress yourself," he concluded, resuming his subtle smile which spread itself over these final words: "I could see at a glance that you were not accustomed to society."

Mme. Verdurin came across to me to shew me Elstir's flowers. If this action, to which I had grown so indifferent, of going out to dinner, had on the contrary, taking the form that made it entirely novel, of a journey along the coast, followed by an ascent in a carriage to a point six hundred feet above the sea, produced in me a sort of intoxication, this feeling had not been dispelled at la Raspelière. "Just look at this, now," said the Mistress, shewing me some huge and splendid roses by Elstir, whose unctuous scarlet and rich white stood out, however, with almost too creamy a relief from the flower-stand upon which they were arranged. "Do you suppose he would still have the touch to get that? Don't you call

that striking? And besides, it's fine as matter, it would be amusing to handle. I can't tell you how amusing it was to watch him painting them. One could feel that he was interested in trying to get just that effect." And the Mistress's gaze rested musingly on this present from the artist in which were combined not merely his great talent but their long friendship which survived only in these mementoes of it which he had bequeathed to her; behind the flowers which long ago he had picked for her, she seemed to see the shapely hand that had painted them, in the course of a morning, in their freshness, so that, they on the table, it leaning against the back of a chair had been able to meet face to face at the Mistress's luncheon party, the roses still alive and their almost lifelike portrait. Almost only, for Elstir was unable to look at a flower without first transplanting it to that inner garden in which we are obliged always to remain. He had shewn in this water-colour the appearance of the roses which he had seen, and which, but for him, no one would ever have known; so that one might say that they were a new variety with which this painter, like a skilful gardener, had enriched the family of the Roses. "From the day he left the little nucleus, he was finished. It seems, my dinners made him waste his time, that I hindered the development of his *genius*," she said in a tone of irony. "As if the society of a woman like myself could fail to be beneficial to an artist," she exclaimed with a burst of pride. Close beside us, M. de Cambremer, who was already seated, seeing that M. de Charlus was standing, made as though to rise and offer him his chair. This offer may have arisen, in the Marquis's mind, from nothing more than a vague wish to be polite. M. de Charlus preferred

to attach to it the sense of a duty which the plain gentleman knew that he owed to a Prince, and felt that he could not establish his right to this precedence better than by declining it. And so he exclaimed: "What are you doing? I beg of you! The idea!" The astutely vehement tone of this protest had in itself something typically "Guermantes" which became even more evident in the imperative, superfluous and familiar gesture with which he brought both his hands down, as though to force him to remain seated, upon the shoulders of M. de Cambremer who had not risen: "Come, come, my dear fellow," the Baron insisted, "this is too much. There is no reason for it! In these days we keep that for Princes of the Blood." I made no more effect on the Cambremers than on Mme. Verdurin by my enthusiasm for their house. For I remained cold to the beauties which they pointed out to me and grew excited over confused reminiscences; at times I even confessed my disappointment at not finding something correspond to what its name had made me imagine. I enraged Mme. de Cambremer by telling her that I had supposed the place to be more in the country. On the other hand I broke off in an ecstasy to sniff the fragrance of a breeze that crept in through the chink of the door. "I see you like draughts," they said to me. My praise of the patch of green lining-cloth that had been pasted over a broken pane met with no greater success: "How frightful!" cried the Marquise. The climax came when I said: "My greatest joy was when I arrived. When I heard my step echoing along the gallery, I felt that I had come into some village council-office, with a map of the district on the wall." This time, Mme. de Cambremer resolutely

turned her back on me. "You don't think the arrangement too bad?" her husband asked her with the same compassionate anxiety with which he would have inquired how his wife had stood some painful ceremony. "They have some fine things." But, inasmuch as malice, when the hard and fast rules of sure taste do not confine it within fixed limits, finds fault with everything, in the persons or in the houses, of the people who have supplanted the critic: "Yes, but they are not in the right places. Besides, are they really as fine as all that?" "You noticed," said M. de Cambremer, with a melancholy that was controlled by a note of firmness, "there are some Jouy hangings that are worn away, some quite threadbare things in this drawing-room!" "And that piece of stuff with its huge roses, like a peasant woman's quilt," said Mme. de Cambremer whose purely artificial culture was confined exclusively to idealist philosophy, impressionist painting and Debussy's music. And, so as not to criticise merely in the name of smartness but in that of good taste: "And they have put up windscreens! Such bad style! What can you expect of such people, they don't know, where could they have learned? They must be retired tradespeople. It's really not bad for them." "I thought the chandeliers good," said the Marquis, though it was not evident why he should make an exception of the chandeliers, just as inevitably, whenever anyone spoke of a church, whether it was the Cathedral of Chartres, or of Rheims, or of Amiens, or the church at Balbec, what he would always make a point of mentioning as admirable would be: "the organ-loft, the pulpit and the misericords." "As for the garden, don't speak about it," said Mme. de Cambremer. "It's a massacre.

Those paths running all crooked." I seized the opportunity while Mme. Verdurin was pouring out coffee to go and glance over the letter which M. de Cambremer had brought me, and in which his mother invited me to dinner. With that faint trace of ink, the handwriting revealed an individuality which in the future I should be able to recognise among a thousand, without any more need to have recourse to the hypothesis of special pens, than to suppose that rare and mysteriously blended colours are necessary to enable a painter to express his original vision. Indeed a paralytic, stricken with agraphia after a seizure, and compelled to look at the script as at a drawing without being able to read it, would have gathered that Mme. de Cambremer belonged to an old family in which the zealous cultivation of literature and the arts had supplied a margin to its aristocratic traditions. He would have guessed also the period in which the Marquise had learned simultaneously to write and to play Chopin's music. It was the time when well-bred people observed the rule of affability and what was called the rule of the three adjectives. Mme. de Cambremer combined the two rules in one. A laudatory adjective was not enough for her, she followed it (after a little stroke of the pen) with a second, then (after another stroke) with a third. But, what was peculiar to herself was that, in defiance of the literary and social object at which she aimed, the sequence of the three epithets assumed in Mme. de Cambremer's notes the aspect not of a progression but of a diminuendo. Mme. de Cambremer told me in this first letter that she had seen Saint-Loup and had appreciated more than ever his "unique—rare—real" qualities, that he was coming to them again with one of his friends (the

one who was in love with her daughter-in-law), and that if I cared to come, with or without them, to dine at Féterne she would be "delighted—happy—pleased." Perhaps it was because her desire to be friendly outran the fertility of her imagination and the riches of her vocabulary that the lady, while determined to utter three exclamations, was incapable of making the second and third anything more than feeble echoes of the first. Add but a fourth adjective, and, of her initial friendliness, there would be nothing left. Moreover, with a certain refined simplicity which cannot have failed to produce a considerable impression upon her family and indeed in her circle of acquaintance, Mme. de Cambremer had acquired the habit of substituting for the word (which might in time begin to ring false) "sincere," the word "true." And to shew that it was indeed by sincerity that she was impelled, she broke the conventional rule that would have placed the adjective "true" before its noun, and planted it boldly after. Her letters ended with: "*Croyez à ma mon amitié vraie.*" "*Croyez à ma sympathie vraie.*" Unfortunately, this had become so stereotyped a formula that the affectation of frankness was more suggestive of a polite fiction than the time-honoured formulas, of the meaning of which people have ceased to think. I was, however, hindered from reading her letter by the confused sound of conversation over which rang out the louder accents of M. de Charlus, who, still on the same topic, was saying to M. de Cambremer: "You reminded me, when you offered me your chair, of a gentleman from whom I received a letter this morning addressed: 'To His Highness, the Baron de Charlus,' and beginning: 'Monseigneur.'" "To be sure, your correspondent was

slightly exaggerating," replied M. de Cambremer, giving way to a discreet show of mirth. M. de Charlus had provoked this; he did not partake in it. "Well, if it comes to that, my dear fellow," he said, "I may observe that, heraldically speaking, he was entirely in the right. I am not regarding it as a personal matter, you understand. I should say the same of anyone else. But one has to face the facts, history is history, we can't alter it and it is not in our power to rewrite it. I need not cite the case of the Emperor William, who at Kiel never ceased to address me as 'Monseigneur.' I have heard it said that he gave the same title to all the Dukes of France, which was an abuse of the privilege, but was perhaps simply a delicate attention aimed over our heads at France herself." "More delicate, perhaps, than sincere," said M. de Cambremer. "Ah! There I must differ from you. Observe that, personally, a gentleman of the lowest rank such as that Hohenzollern, a Protestant to boot, and one who has usurped the throne of my cousin the King of Hanover, can be no favourite of mine," added M. de Charlus, with whom the annexation of Hanover seemed to rankle more than that of Alsace-Lorraine. "But I believe the feeling that turns the Emperor in our direction to be profoundly sincere. Fools will tell you that he is a stage emperor. He is on the contrary marvellously intelligent; it is true that he knows nothing about painting, and has forced Herr Tschudi to withdraw the Elstirs from the public galleries. But Louis XIV did not appreciate the Dutch Masters, he had the same fondness for display, and yet he was, when all is said, a great Monarch. Besides, William II has armed his country from the military and naval point of view in a way that

Louis XIV failed to do, and I hope that his reign will never know the reverses that darkened the closing days of him who is fatuously styled the Roi Soleil. The Republic made a great mistake, to my mind, in rejecting the overtures of the Hohenzollern, or responding to them only in driblets. He is very well aware of it himself and says, with that gift that he has for the right expression: 'What I want is a clasped hand, not a raised hat.' As a man, he is vile; he has abandoned, surrendered, denied his best friends, in circumstances in which his silence was as deplorable as theirs was grand," continued M. de Charlus, who was irresistibly drawn by his own tendencies to the Eulenburg affair, and remembered what one of the most highly placed of the culprits had said to him: "The Emperor must have relied upon our delicacy to have dared to allow such a trial. But he was not mistaken in trusting to our discretion. We would have gone to the scaffold with our lips sealed." "All that, however, has nothing to do with what I was trying to explain, which is that, in Germany, mediatised Princes like ourselves are *Durchlaucht,* and in France our rank of Highness was publicly recognised. Saint-Simon tries to make out that this was an abuse on our part, in which he is entirely mistaken. The reason that he gives, namely that Louis XIV forbade us to style him the Most Christian King and ordered us to call him simply the King, proves merely that we held our title from him, and not that we had not the rank of Prince. Otherwise, it would have to be withheld from the Duc de Lorraine and ever so many others. Besides, several of our titles come from the House of Lorraine through Thérèse d'Espinay, my great-grandmother, who was the daughter of the Damoiseau de Commercy."

Observing that Morel was listening, M. de Charlus proceeded to develop the reasons for his claim. "I have pointed out to my brother that it is not in the third part of Gotha, but in the second, not to say the first, that the account of our family ought to be included," he said, without stopping to think that Morel did not know what "Gotha" was. "But that is his affair, he is the Head of my House, and so long as he raises no objection and allows the matter to pass, I have only to shut my eyes." "M. Brichot interests me greatly," I said to Mme. Verdurin as she joined me, and I slipped Mme. de Cambremer's letter into my pocket. "He has a cultured mind and is an excellent man," she replied coldly. "Of course what he lacks is originality and taste, he has a terrible memory. They used to say of the 'forebears' of the people we have here this evening, the *émigrés*, that they had forgotten nothing. But they had at least the excuse," she said, borrowing one of Swann's epigrams, "that they had learned nothing. Whereas Brichot knows everything, and hurls chunks of dictionary at our heads during dinner. I'm sure you know everything now about the names of all the towns and villages." While Mme. Verdurin was speaking, it occurred to me that I had determined to ask her something, but I could not remember what it was. I could not at this moment say what Mme. Verdurin was wearing that evening. Perhaps even then I was no more able to say, for I have not an observant mind. But feeling that her dress was not unambitious I said to her something polite and even admiring. She was like almost all women, who imagine that a compliment that is paid to them is a literal statement of the truth, and is a judgment impartially, irresisti-

bly pronounced, as though it referred to a work of art that has no connexion with a person. And so it was with an earnestness which made me blush for my own hypocrisy that she replied with the proud and artless question, habitual in the circumstances: "You like it?" "I know you're talking about Brichot. Eh, Chantepie, Freycinet, he spared you nothing. I had my eye on you, my little Mistress!" "I saw you, it was all I could do not to laugh." "You are talking about Chantepie, I am certain," said M. Verdurin, as he came towards us. I had been alone, as I thought of my strip of green cloth and of a scent of wood, in failing to notice that, while he discussed etymologies, Brichot had been provoking derision. And inasmuch as the expressions which, for me, gave their value to things, were of the sort which other people either do not feel or reject without thinking of them, as unimportant, they were entirely useless to me and had the additional drawback of making me appear stupid in the eyes of Mme. Verdurin who saw that I had "swallowed" Brichot, as before I had appeared stupid to Mme. de Guermantes, because I enjoyed going to see Mme. d'Arpajon. With Brichot, however, there was another reason. I was not one of the little clan. And in every clan, whether it be social, political, literary, one contracts a perverse facility in discovering in a conversation, in an official speech, in a story, in a sonnet, everything that the honest reader would never have dreamed of finding there. How many times have I found myself, after reading with a certain emotion a tale skilfully told by a learned and slightly old-fashioned Academician, on the point of saying to Bloch or to Mme. de Guermantes: "How charming this is!" when before I had opened my

mouth they exclaimed, each in a different language: "If you want to be really amused, read a tale by So-and-so. Human stupidity has never sunk to greater depths." Bloch's scorn was aroused principally by the discovery that certain effects of style, pleasant enough in themselves, were slightly faded; that of Mme. de Guermantes because the tale seemed to prove the direct opposite of what the author meant, for reasons of fact which she had the ingenuity to deduce but which would never have occurred to me. I was no less surprised to discover the irony that underlay the Verdurins' apparent friendliness for Brichot than to hear, some days later, at Féterne, the Cambremers say to me, on hearing my enthusiastic praise of la Raspelière: "It's impossible that you can be sincere, after all they've done to it." It is true that they admitted that the china was good. Like the shocking windscreens, it had escaped my notice. "Anyhow, when you go back to Balbec, you will know what Balbec means," said M. Verdurin ironically. It was precisely the things Brichot had told me that interested me. As for what they called his mind, it was exactly the same mind that had at one time been so highly appreciated by the little clan. He talked with the same irritating fluency, but his words no longer carried, having to overcome a hostile silence or disagreeable echoes; what had altered was not the things that he said but the acoustics of the room and the attitude of his audience. "Take care," Mme. Verdurin murmured, pointing to Brichot. The latter, whose hearing remained keener than his vision, darted at the mistress the hastily withdrawn gaze of a short-sighted philosopher. If his bodily eyes were less good, his mind's eye on the contrary had begun to take a larger view of things. He

saw how little was to be expected of human affection, and resigned himself to it. Undoubtedly the discovery pained him. It may happen that even the man who on one evening only, in a circle where he is usually greeted with joy, realises that the others have found him too frivolous or too pedantic or too loud, or too forward, or whatever it may be, returns home miserable. Often it is a difference of opinion, or of system, that has made him appear to other people absurd or old-fashioned. Often he is perfectly well aware that those others are inferior to himself. He could easily dissect the sophistries with which he has been tacitly condemned, he is tempted to pay a call, to write a letter: on second thoughts, he does nothing, awaits the invitation for the following week. Sometimes, too, these discomfitures, instead of ending with the evening, last for months. Arising from the instability of social judgments, they increase that instability further. For the man who knows that Mme. X despises him, feeling that he is respected at Mme. Y's, pronounces her far superior to the other and emigrates to her house. This however is not the proper place to describe those men, superior to the life of society but lacking the capacity to realise their own worth outside it, glad to be invited, embittered by being disparaged, discovering annually the faults of the hostess to whom they have been offering incense and the genius of her whom they have never properly appreciated, ready to return to the old love when they shall have felt the drawbacks to be found equally in the new, and when they have begun to forget those of the old. We may judge by these temporary discomfitures the grief that Brichot felt at one which he knew to be final. He was not unaware that Mme. Verdurin some-

times laughed at him publicly, even at his infirmities, and knowing how little was to be expected of human affection, submitting himself to the facts, he continued nevertheless to regard the Mistress as his best friend. But, from the blush that swept over the scholar's face, Mme. Verdurin saw that he had heard her, and made up her mind to be kind to him for the rest of the evening. I could not help remarking to her that she had not been very kind to Saniette. "What! Not kind to him! Why, he adores us, you can't imagine what we are to him. My husband is sometimes a little irritated by his stupidity, and you must admit that he has every reason, but when that happens why doesn't he rise in revolt, instead of cringing like a whipped dog? It is not honest. I don't like it. That doesn't mean that I don't always try to calm my husband, because if he went too far, all that would happen would be that Saniette would stay away; and I don't want that because I may tell you that he hasn't a penny in the world, he needs his dinners. But after all, if he does mind, he can stay away, it has nothing to do with me, when a person depends on other people he should try not to be such an idiot." "The Duchy of Aumale was in our family for years before passing to the House of France," M. de Charlus was explaining to M. de Cambremer, before a speechless Morel, for whom, as a matter of fact, the whole of this dissertation was, if not actually addressed to him, intended. "We took precedence over all foreign Princes; I could give you a hundred examples. The Princesse de Croy having attempted, at the burial of Monsieur, to fall on her knees after my great-great-grandmother, that lady reminded her sharply that she had not the privilege of the hassock, made the

officer on duty remove it, and reported the matter to the King, who ordered Mme. de Croy to call upon Mme. de Guermantes and offer her apologies. The Duc de Bourgogne having come to us with ushers with raised wands, we obtained the King's authority to have them lowered. I know it is not good form to speak of the merits of one's own family. But it is well known that our people were always to the fore in the hour of danger. Our battle-cry, after we abandoned that of the Dukes of Brabant, was *Passavant!* So that it is fair enough after all that this right to be everywhere the first, which we had established for so many centuries in war, should afterwards have been confirmed to us at Court. And, egad, it has always been admitted there. I may give you a further instance, that of the Princess of Baden. As she had so far forgotten herself as to attempt to challenge the precedence of that same Duchesse de Guermantes of whom I was speaking just now, and had attempted to go in first to the King's presence, taking advantage of a momentary hesitation which my relative may perhaps have shewn (although there could be no reason for it), the King called out: 'Come in, cousin, come in; Mme. de Baden knows very well what her duty is to you.' And it was as Duchesse de Guermantes that she held this rank, albeit she was of no mean family herself, since she was through her mother niece to the Queen of Poland, the Queen of Hungary, the Elector Palatine, the Prince of Savoy-Carignano and the Elector of Hanover, afterwards King of England." "*Maecenas atavis edite regibus!*" said Brichot, addressing M. de Charlus, who acknowledged the compliment with a slight inclination of his head. "What did you say?" Mme. Verdurin asked

Brichot, anxious to make amends to him for her previous speech. "I was referring, Heaven forgive me, to a dandy who was the pick of the basket" (Mme. Verdurin winced) "about the time of Augustus," (Mme. Verdurin, reassured by the remoteness in time of this basket, assumed a more serene expression) "of a friend of Virgil and Horace who carried their sycophancy to the extent of proclaiming to his face his more than aristocratic, his royal descent, in a word I was referring to Maecenas, a bookworm who was the friend of Horace, Virgil, Augustus. I am sure that M. de Charlus knows all about Maecenas." With a gracious, sidelong glance at Mme. Verdurin, because he had heard her make an appointment with Morel for the day after next and was afraid that she might not invite him also, "I should say," said M. de Charlus, "that Maecenas was more or less the Verdurin of antiquity." Mme. Verdurin could not altogether suppress a smile of satisfaction. She went over to Morel. "He's nice, your father's friend," she said to him. "One can see that he's an educated man, and well bred. He will get on well in our little nucleus. What is his address in Paris?" Morel preserved a haughty silence and merely proposed a game of cards. Mme. Verdurin insisted upon a little violin music first. To the general astonishment, M. de Charlus, who never referred to his own considerable gifts, accompanied, in the purest style, the closing passage (uneasy, tormented, Schumannesque, but, for all that, earlier than Franck's Sonata) of the Sonata for piano and violin by Fauré. I felt that he would furnish Morel, marvellously endowed as to tone and virtuosity, with just those qualities that he lacked, culture and style. But I thought with curiosity of this

combination in a single person of a physical blemish and a spiritual gift. M. de Charlus was not very different from his brother, the Duc de Guermantes. Indeed, a moment ago (though this was rare), he had spoken as bad French as his brother. He having reproached me (doubtless in order that I might speak in glowing terms of Morel to Mme. Verdurin) with never coming to see him, and I having pleaded discretion, he had replied: "But, since it is I that asks you, there is no one but I who am in a position to take offence." This might have been said by the Duc de Guermantes. M. de Charlus was only a Guermantes when all was said. But it had been enough that nature should upset the balance of his nervous system sufficiently to make him prefer to the woman that his brother the Duke would have chosen one of Virgil's shepherds or Plato's disciples, and at once qualities unknown to the Duc de Guermantes and often combined with this want of balance had made M. de Charlus an exquisite pianist, an amateur painter who was not devoid of taste, an eloquent talker. Who would ever have detected that the rapid, eager, charming style with which M. de Charlus played the Schumannesque passage of Fauré's Sonata had its equivalent—one dares not say its cause—in elements entirely physical, in the nervous defects of M. de Charlus? We shall explain later on what we mean by nervous defects, and why it is that a Greek of the time of Socrates, a Roman of the time of Augustus might be what we know them to have been and yet remain absolutely normal men, and not men-women such as we see around us to-day. Just as he had genuine artistic tendencies, which had never come to fruition, so M. de Charlus had, far more than the Duke,

loved their mother, loved his own wife, and indeed, years after her death, if anyone spoke of her to him would shed tears, but superficial tears, like the perspiration of an over-stout man, whose brow will glisten with sweat at the slightest exertion. With this difference, that to the latter we say: "How hot you are," whereas we pretend not to notice other people's tears. We, that is to say, people in society; for the humbler sort are as distressed by the sight of tears as if a sob were more serious than a hemorrhage. His sorrow after the death of his wife, thanks to the habit of falsehood, did not debar M. de Charlus from a life which was not in harmony with it. Indeed later on, he sank so low as to let it be known that, during the funeral rites, he had found an opportunity of asking the acolyte for his name and address. And it may have been true.

When the piece came to an end, I ventured to ask for some Franck, which appeared to cause Mme. de Cambremer such acute pain that I did not insist. "You can't admire that sort of thing," she said to me. Instead she asked for Debussy's *Fêtes,* which made her exclaim: "Ah! How sublime!" from the first note. But Morel discovered that he remembered the opening bars only, and in a spirit of mischief, without any intention to deceive, began a March by Meyerbeer. Unfortunately, as he left little interval and made no announcement, everybody supposed that he was still playing Debussy, and continued to exclaim "Sublime!" Morel, by revealing that the composer was that not of *Pelléas* but of *Robert le Diable* created a certain chill. Mme. de Cambremer had scarcely time to feel it, for she had just discovered a volume of Scarlatti, and had flung herself upon it with an

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hysterical impulse. "Oh! Play this, look, this piece, it's divine," she cried. And yet, of this composer long despised, recently promoted to the highest honours, what she had selected in her feverish impatience was one of those infernal pieces which have so often kept us from sleeping, while a merciless pupil repeats them indefinitely on the next floor. But Morel had had enough music, and as he insisted upon cards, M. de Charlus, to be able to join in, proposed a game of whist. "He was telling the Master just now that he is a Prince," said Ski to Mme. Verdurin, "but it's not true, they're quite a humble family of architects." "I want to know what it was you were saying about Maecenas. It interests me, don't you know!" Mme. Verdurin repeated to Brichot, with an affability that carried him off his feet. And so, in order to shine in the Mistress's eyes, and possibly in mine: "Why, to tell you the truth, Madame, Maecenas interests me chiefly because he is the earliest apostle of note of that Chinese god who numbers more followers in France today than Brahma, than Christ himself, the all-powerful God Ubedamd." Mme. Verdurin was no longer content, upon these occasions, with burying her head in her hands. She would descend with the suddenness of the insects called ephemeral upon Princess Sherbatoff; were the latter within reach the Mistress would cling to her shoulder, dig her nails into it, and hide her face against it for a few moments like a child playing at hide and seek. Concealed by this protecting screen, she was understood to be laughing until she cried and was as well able to think of nothing at all as people are who while saying a prayer that is rather long take the wise precaution of burying their faces in their hands. Mme. Verdurin used to imi-

tate them when she listened to Beethoven quartets, so as at the same time to let it be seen that she regarded them as a prayer and not to let it be seen that she was asleep. "I am quite serious, Madame," said Brichot. "Too numerous, I consider, to-day is become the person who spends his time gazing at his navel as though it were the hub of the universe. As a matter of doctrine, I have no objection to offer to some Nirvana which will dissolve us in the great Whole (which, like Munich and Oxford, is considerably nearer to Paris than Asnières or Bois-Colombes), but it is unworthy either of a true Frenchman, or of a true European even, when the Japanese are possibly at the gates of our Byzantium, that socialised antimilitarists should be gravely discussing the cardinal virtues of free verse." Mme. Verdurin felt that she might dispense with the Princess's mangled shoulder, and allowed her face to become once more visible, not without pretending to wipe her eyes and gasping two or three times for breath. But Brichot was determined that I should have my share in the entertainment, and having learned, from those oral examinations which he conducted so admirably, that the best way to flatter the young is to lecture them, to make them feel themselves important, to make them regard you as a reactionary: "I have no wish to blaspheme against the Gods of Youth," he said, with that furtive glance at myself which a speaker turns upon a member of his audience whom he has mentioned by name. "I have no wish to be damned as a heretic and renegade in the Mallarmean chapel in which our new friend, like all the young men of his age, must have served the esoteric mass, at least as an acolyte, and have shewn himself deliquescent or Rosicrucian. But, really,

we have seen more than enough of these intellectuals worshipping art with a big A, who, when they can no longer intoxicate themselves upon Zola, inject themselves with Verlaine. Become etheromaniacs out of Baudelairian devotion, they would no longer be capable of the virile effort which the country may, one day or another, demand of them, anaesthetised as they are by the great literary neurosis in the heated, enervating atmosphere, heavy with unwholesome vapours, of a symbolism of the opium-pipe." Feeling incapable of feigning any trace of admiration for Brichot's inept and motley tirade, I turned to Ski and assured him that he was entirely mistaken as to the family to which M. de Charlus belonged; he replied that he was certain of his facts, and added that I myself had said that his real name was Gandin, Le Gandin. "I told you," was my answer, "that Mme. de Cambremer was the sister of an engineer, M. Legrandin. I never said a word to you about M. de Charlus. There is about as much connexion between him and Mme. de Cambremer as between the Great Condé and Racine." "Indeed! I thought there was," said Ski lightly, with no more apology for his mistake than he had made a few hours earlier for the mistake that had nearly made his party miss the train. "Do you intend to remain long on this coast?" Mme. Verdurin asked M. de Charlus, in whom she foresaw an addition to the faithful and trembled lest he should be returning too soon to Paris. "Good Lord, one never knows," replied M. de Charlus in a nasal drawl. "I should like to stay here until the end of September." "You are quite right," said Mme. Verdurin; "that is the time for fine storms at sea." "To tell you the truth, that is not what would influence me. I have for some time

past unduly neglected the Archangel Saint Michael, my Patron, and I should like to make amends to him by staying for his feast, on the 29th of September, at the Abbey on the Mount." "You take an interest in all that sort of thing?" asked Mme. Verdurin, who might perhaps have succeeded in hushing the voice of her outraged anti-clericalism, had she not been afraid that so long an expedition might make the violinist and the Baron "fail" her for forty-eight hours. "You are perhaps afflicted with intermittent deafness," M. de Charlus replied insolently. "I have told you that Saint Michael is one of my Glorious Patrons." Then, smiling with a benevolent ecstasy, his eyes gazing into the distance, his voice strengthened by an excitement which seemed now to be not merely aesthetic but religious: "It is so beautiful at the offertory when Michael stands erect by the altar, in a white robe, swinging a golden censer heaped so high with perfumes that the fragrance of them mounts up to God." "We might go there in a party," suggested Mme. Verdurin, notwithstanding her horror of the clergy. "At that moment, when the offertory begins," went on M. de Charlus who, for other reasons but in the same manner as good speakers in Parliament, never replied to an interruption and would pretend not to have heard it, "it would be wonderful to see our young friend Palestrinising, and even performing an aria by Bach. The worthy Abbot, too would be wild with joy, and that is the greatest homage, at least the greatest public homage that I can pay to my Holy Patron. What an edification for the faithful! We must mention it presently to the young Angelico of music, himself a warrior like Saint Michael."

Saniette, summoned to make a fourth, declared that he

did not know how to play whist. And Cottard, seeing that there was not much time left before our train, embarked at once on a game of écarté with Morel. M. Verdurin was furious, and bore down with a terrible expression upon Saniette: "Is there anything in the world that you can play?" he cried, furious at being deprived of the opportunity for a game of whist, and delighted to have found one to insult the old registrar. He, in his terror, did his best to look clever: "Yes, I can play the piano," he said. Cottard and Morel were seated face to face. "Your deal," said Cottard. "Suppose we go nearer to the card-table," M. de Charlus, worried by the sight of Morel in Cottard's company, suggested to M. de Cambremer. "It is quite as interesting as those questions of etiquette which in these days have ceased to count for very much. The only kings that we have left, in France at least, are the kings in the pack of cards, who seem to me to be positively swarming in the hand of our young virtuoso," he added a moment later, from an admiration for Morel which extended to his way of playing cards, to flatter him also, and finally to account for his suddenly turning to lean over the young violinist's shoulder. "I-ee cut," said (putting on a vile foreign accent) Cottard, whose children burst out laughing, like his students and the chief dresser, whenever the master, even by the bedside of a serious case, uttered with the emotionless face of an epileptic one of his hackneyed witticisms. "I don't know what to play," said Morel, seeking advice from M. de Cambremer. "Just as you please, you're bound to lose, whatever you play, it's all the same (*c'est égal*)." "*Egal* . . . Ingalli?" said the doctor, with an insinuating, kindly glance at M. de Cambremer. "She was what we call a

true diva, she was a dream, a Carmen such as we shall never see again. She was wedded to the part. I used to enjoy too listening to Ingalli—married." The Marquis drew himself up with that contemptuous vulgarity of well-bred people who do not realise that they are insulting their host by appearing uncertain whether they ought to associate with his guests, and adopt English manners by way of apology for a scornful expression: "Who is that gentleman playing cards, what does he do for a living, what does he *sell?* I rather like to know whom I am meeting, so as not to make friends with any Tom, Dick or Harry. But I didn't catch his name when you did me the honour of introducing me to him." If M. Verdurin, availing himself of this phrase, had indeed introduced M. de Cambremer to his fellow-guests, the other would have been greatly annoyed. But, knowing that it was the opposite procedure that was observed, he thought it gracious to assume a genial and modest air, without risk to himself. The pride that M. Verdurin took in his intimacy with Cottard had increased if anything now that the doctor had become an eminent professor. But it no longer found expression in the artless language of earlier days. Then, when Cottard was scarcely known to the public, if you spoke to M. Verdurin of his wife's facial neuralgia: "There is nothing to be done," he would say, with the artless self-satisfaction of people who assume that anyone whom they know must be famous, and that everybody knows the name of their family singing-master. "If she had an ordinary doctor, one might look for a second opinion, but when that doctor is called Cottard" (a name which he pronounced as though it were Bouchard or Charcot) "one has simply to bow to the inevitable."

Adopting a reverse procedure, knowing that M. de Cambremer must certainly have heard of the famous Professor Cottard, M. Verdurin adopted a tone of simplicity. "He's our family doctor, a worthy soul whom we adore and who would let himself be torn in pieces for our sakes; he is not a doctor, he is a friend, I don't suppose you have ever heard of him or that his name would convey anything to you, in any case to us it is the name of a very good man, of a very dear friend, Cottard." This name, murmured in a modest tone, took in M. de Cambremer who supposed that his host was referring to some one else. "Cottard? You don't mean Professor Cottard?" At that moment one heard the voice of the said Professor who, at an awkward point in the game, was saying as he looked at his cards: "This is where Greek meets Greek." "Why, yes, to be sure, he is a professor," said M. Verdurin. "What! Professor Cottard! You are not making a mistake! You are quite sure it's the same man! The one who lives in the Rue du Bac!" "Yes, his address is 43, Rue du Bac. You know him?" "But everybody knows Professor Cottard. He's at the top of the tree! You might as well ask me if I knew Bouffe de Saint-Blaise or Courtois-Suffit. I could see when I heard him speak that he was not an ordinary person, that is why I took the liberty of asking you." "Come now, what shall I play, trumps?" asked Cottard. Then abruptly, with a vulgarity which would have been offensive even in heroic circumstances, as when a soldier uses a coarse expression to convey his contempt for death, but became doubly stupid in the safe pastime of a game of cards, Cottard, deciding to play a trump, assumed a sombre, suicidal air, and, borrowing the language of people who are risk-

ing their skins, played his card as though it were his life, with the exclamation: "There it is, and be damned to it!" It was not the right card to play, but he had a consolation. In the middle of the room, in a deep armchair, Mme. Cottard, yielding to the effect, which she always found irresistible, of a good dinner, had succumbed after vain efforts to the vast and gentle slumbers that were overpowering her. In vain might she sit up now and again, and smile, whether at her own absurdity or from fear of leaving unanswered some polite speech that might have been addressed to her, she sank back, in spite of herself, into the clutches of the implacable and delicious malady. More than the noise, what awakened her thus for an instant only was the glance (which, in her wifely affection she could see even when her eyes were shut, and foresaw, for the same scene occurred every evening and haunted her dreams like the thought of the hour at which one will have to rise), the glance with which the Professor drew the attention of those present to his wife's slumbers. To begin with, he merely looked at her and smiled, for if as a doctor he disapproved of this habit of falling asleep after dinner (or at least gave this scientific reason for growing annoyed later on, but it is not certain whether it was a determining reason, so many and diverse were the views that he held about it), as an all-powerful and teasing husband, he was delighted to be able to make a fool of his wife, to rouse her only partly at first, so that she might fall asleep again and he have the pleasure of waking her afresh.

By this time, Mme. Cottard was sound asleep. "Now then, Léontine, you're snoring," the professor called to her. "I am listening to Mme. Swann, my dear," Mme.

Cottard replied faintly, and dropped back into her lethargy. "It's perfect nonsense," exclaimed Cottard, "she'll be telling us presently that she wasn't asleep. She's like the patients who come to consult us and insist that they never sleep at all." "They imagine it, perhaps," said M. de Cambremer with a laugh. But the doctor enjoyed contradicting no less than teasing, and would on no account allow a layman to talk medicine to him. "People do not imagine that they never sleep," he promulgated in a dogmatic tone. "Ah!" replied the Marquis with a respectful bow, such as Cottard at one time would have made. "It is easy to see," Cottard went on, "that you have never administered, as I have, as much as two grains of trional without succeeding in provoking somnolescence." "Quite so, quite so," replied the Marquis, laughing with a superior air, "I have never taken trional, or any of those drugs which soon cease to have any effect but ruin your stomach. When a man has been out shooting all night, like me, in the forest of Chantepie, I can assure you he doesn't need any trional to make him sleep." "It is only fools who say that," replied the Professor. "Trional frequently has a remarkable effect on the nervous tone. You mention trional, have you any idea what it is?" "Well . . . I've heard people say that it is a drug to make one sleep." "You are not answering my question," replied the Professor, who, thrice weekly, at the Faculty, sat on the board of examiners. "I don't ask you whether it makes you sleep or not, but what it is. Can you tell me what percentage it contains of amyl and ethyl?" "No," replied M. de Cambremer with embarrassment. "I prefer a good glass of old brandy or even 345 Port." "Which are ten times

as toxic," the Professor interrupted. "As for trional," M. de Cambremer ventured, "my wife goes in for all that sort of thing, you'd better talk to her about it." "She probably knows just as much about it as yourself. In any case, if your wife takes trional to make her sleep, you can see that mine has no need of it. Come along, Léontine, wake up, you're getting ankylosed, did you ever see me fall asleep after dinner? What will you be like when you're sixty, if you fall asleep now like an old woman? You'll go and get fat, you're arresting the circulation. She doesn't even hear what I'm saying." "They're bad for one's health, these little naps after dinner, ain't they, Doctor?" said M. de Cambremer, seeking to rehabilitate himself with Cottard. "After a heavy meal one ought to take exercise." "Stuff and nonsense!" replied the Doctor. "We have taken identical quantities of food from the stomach of a dog that has lain quiet and from the stomach of a dog that has been running about, and it is in the former that digestion is more advanced." "Then it is sleep that stops digestion." "That depends upon whether you mean oesophagic digestion, stomachic digestion, intestinal digestion; it is useless to give you explanations which you would not understand since you have never studied medicine. Now then, Léontine, quick march, it is time we were going." This was not true, for the doctor was going merely to continue his game, but he hoped thus to cut short in a more drastic fashion the slumbers of the deaf mute to whom he had been addressing without a word of response the most learned exhortations. Whether a determination to remain awake survived in Mme. Cottard, even in the state of sleep, or because the armchair offered no support to her head, it

was jerked mechanically from left to right, and up and down, in the empty air, like a lifeless object, and Mme. Cottard, with her nodding poll, appeared now to be listening to music, now to be in the last throes of death. Where her husband's increasingly vehement admonitions failed of their effect, her sense of her own stupidity proved successful: "My bath is nice and hot," she murmured, "but the quills of the dictionary . . ." she exclaimed as she sat bolt upright. "Oh! Good lord, what a fool I am. Whatever have I been saying, I was thinking about my hat, I'm sure I said something silly, in another minute I should have been asleep, it's that wretched fire." Everybody began to laugh, for there was no fire in the room.[1]

[1] In the French text of Sodome et Gomorrhe, Volume II ends at this point.

"You are making fun of me," said Mme. Cottard, herself laughing, and raising her hand to her brow to wipe away, with the light touch of a hypnotist and the sureness of a woman putting her hair straight, the last traces of sleep, "I must offer my humble apologies to dear Mme. Verdurin and ask her to tell me the truth." But her smile at once grew sorrowful, for the Professor who knew that his wife sought to please him and trembled lest she should fail, had shouted at her: "Look at yourself in the glass, you are as red as if you had an eruption of acne, you look just like an old peasant." "You know, he is charming," said Mme. Verdurin, "he has such a delightfully sarcastic side to his character. And then, he snatched my husband from the jaws of death when the whole Faculty had given him up. He spent three nights by his bedside, without ever lying down. And so Cottard to me, you know," she went on, in a grave and almost menacing tone, raising her hand to the twin spheres, shrouded in white tresses, of her musical temples, and as though we had wished to assault the doctor, "is sacred! He could ask me for anything in the world! As it is, I don't call him Doctor Cottard, I call him Doctor God! And even in saying that I am slandering him, for this God does everything in his power to remedy some of the disasters for which the other is responsible." "Play a trump," M. de Charlus said to Morel with a delighted air. "A trump, here goes," said the violinist. "You ought to have declared your king first," said M. de Charlus, "you're not paying attention to the game, but how well you play!" "I have the king," said Morel. "He's a fine man," replied the Professor. "What's all that business up there with the sticks?" asked Mme. Verdurin,

drawing M. de Cambremer's attention to a superb escutcheon carved over the mantelpiece. "Are they your *arms?*" she added with an ironical disdain. "No, they are not ours," replied M. de Cambremer. "We bear, *barry of five, embattled counterembattled or and gules, as many trefoils countercharged.* No, those are the arms of the Arrachepels, who were not of our stock, but from whom we inherited the house, and nobody of our line has ever made any changes here. The Arrachepels (formerly Pelvilains, we are told) bore *or five piles couped in base gules.* When they allied themselves with the Féterne family, their blazon changed, but remained *cantoned within twenty cross crosslets fitchee in base or, a dexter canton ermine.*" "That's one for her!" muttered Mme. de Cambremer. "My great-grandmother was a d'Arrachepel or de Rachepel, as you please, for both forms are found in the old charters," continued M. de Cambremer, blushing vividly, for only then did the idea for which his wife had given him credit occur to him, and he was afraid that Mme. Verdurin might have applied to herself a speech which had been made without any reference to her. "The history books say that, in the eleventh century, the first Arrachepel, Macé, named Pelvilain, shewed a special aptitude, in siege warfare, in tearing up piles. Whence the name Arrachepel by which he was ennobled, and the piles which you see persisting through the centuries in their arms. These are the piles which, to render fortifications more impregnable, used to be driven, plugged, if you will pardon the expression, into the ground in front of them, and fastened together laterally. They are what you quite rightly called sticks, though they had nothing to do with the floating sticks of our good Lafon-

taine. For they were supposed to render a stronghold unassailable. Of course, with our modern artillery, they make one smile. But you must bear in mind that I am speaking of the eleventh century." "It is all rather out of date," said Mme. Verdurin, "but the little campanile has a character." "You have," said Cottard, "the luck of . . . turlututu," a word which he gladly repeated to avoid using Molière's. "Do you know why the king of diamonds was turned out of the army?" "I shouldn't mind being in his shoes," said Morel, who was tired of military service. "Oh! What a bad patriot," exclaimed M. de Charlus, who could not refrain from pinching the violinist's ear. "No, you don't know why the king of diamonds was turned out of the army," Cottard pursued, determined to make his joke, "it's because he has only one eye." "You are up against it, Doctor," said M. de Cambremer, to shew Cottard that he knew who he was. "This young man is astonishing," M. de Charlus interrupted innocently. "He plays like a god." This observation did not find favour with the doctor, who replied: "Never too late to mend. Who laughs last, laughs longest." "Queen, ace," Morel, whom fortune was favouring, announced triumphantly. The doctor bowed his head as though powerless to deny this good fortune, and admitted, spellbound: "That's fine." "We are so pleased to have met M. de Charlus," said Mme. de Cambremer to Mme. Verdurin. "Had you never met him before? He is quite nice, he is unusual, he is *of a period*" (she would have found it difficult to say which), replied Mme. Verdurin with the satisfied smile of a connoisseur, a judge and a hostess. Mme. de Cambremer asked me if I was coming to Féterne with Saint-

Loup. I could not suppress a cry of admiration when I saw the moon hanging like an orange lantern beneath the vault of oaks that led away from the house. "That's nothing, presently, when the moon has risen higher and the valley is lighted up, it will be a thousand times better." "Are you staying any time in this neighbourhood, Madame?" M. de Cambremer asked Mme. Cottard, a speech that might be interpreted as a vague intention to invite her, and dispensed him for the moment from making any more precise engagement. "Oh, certainly, Sir, I regard this annual exodus as most important for the children. Whatever you may say, they must have fresh air. The Faculty wanted to send me to Vichy; but it is too stuffy there, and I can look after my stomach when those big boys of mine have grown a little bigger. Besides, the Professor, with all the examinations he has to hold, has always got his shoulder to the wheel, and the hot weather tires him dreadfully. I feel that a man needs a thorough rest after he has been on the go all the year like that. Whatever happens we shall stay another month at least." "Ah! In that case we shall meet again." "Besides, I shall be all the more obliged to stay here as my husband has to go on a visit to Savoy, and won't be finally settled here for another fortnight." "I like the view of the valley even more than the sea view," Mme. Verdurin went on. "You are going to have a splendid night for your journey." "We ought really to find out whether the carriages are ready, if you are absolutely determined to go back to Balbec to-night," M. Verdurin said to me, "for I see no necessity for it myself. We could drive you over to-morrow morning. It is certain to be fine. The roads are excellent." I said

that it was impossible. "But in any case it is not time yet," the Mistress protested. "Leave them alone, they have heaps of time. A lot of good it will do them to arrive at the station with an hour to wait. They are far happier here. And you, my young Mozart," she said to Morel, not venturing to address M. de Charlus directly, "won't you stay the night. We have some nice rooms facing the sea." "No, he can't," M. de Charlus replied on behalf of the absorbed card-player who had not heard. "He has a pass until midnight only. He must go back to bed like a good little boy, obedient, and well-behaved," he added in a complaisant, mannered, insistent voice, as though he derived some sadic pleasure from the use of this chaste comparison and also from letting his voice dwell, in passing, upon any reference to Morel, from touching him with (failing his fingers) words that seemed to explore his person.

From the sermon that Brichot had addressed to me, M. de Cambremer had concluded that I was a Dreyfusard. As he himself was as anti-Dreyfusard as possible, out of courtesy to a foe, he began to sing me the praises of a Jewish colonel who had always been very decent to a cousin of the Chevregny and had secured for him the promotion he deserved. "And my cousin's opinions were the exact opposite," said M. de Cambremer; he omitted to mention what those opinions were, but I felt that they were as antiquated and misshapen as his own face, opinions which a few families in certain small towns must long have entertained. "Well, you know, I call that really fine!" was M. de Cambremer's conclusion. It is true that he was hardly employing the word "fine" in the aesthetic sense in which it would have

suggested to his wife and mother different works, but works, anyhow, of art. M. de Cambremer often made use of this term, when for instance he was congratulating a delicate person who had put on a little flesh. "What, you have gained half-a-stone in two months. I say, that's fine!" Refreshments were set out on a table. Mme. Verdurin invited the gentlemen to go and choose whatever drinks they preferred. M. de Charlus went and drank his glass and at once returned to a seat by the card-table from which he did not stir. Mme. Verdurin asked him: "Have you tasted my orangeade?" Upon which M. de Charlus, with a gracious smile, in a crystalline tone which he rarely sounded and with endless motions of his lips and body, replied: "No, I preferred its neighbour, it was strawberry-juice, I think, it was delicious." It is curious that a certain order of secret actions has the external effect of a manner of speaking or gesticulating which reveals them. If a gentleman believes or disbelieves in the Immaculate Conception, or in the innocence of Dreyfus, or in a plurality of worlds, and wishes to keep his opinion to himself, you will find nothing in his voice or in his movements that will let you read his thoughts. But on hearing M. de Charlus say in that shrill voice and with that smile and waving his arms: "No, I preferred its neighbour, the strawberry-juice," one could say: "There, he likes the stronger sex," with the same certainty as enables a judge to sentence a criminal who has not confessed, a doctor a patient suffering from general paralysis who himself is perhaps unaware of his malady but has made some mistake in pronunciation from which one can deduce that he will be dead in three years. Perhaps the people who conclude from a man's way of saying: "No,

I preferred its neighbour, the strawberry-juice," a love of the kind called unnatural, have no need of any such scientific knowledge. But that is because there is a more direct relation between the revealing sign and the secret. Without saying it in so many words to oneself, one feels that it is a gentle, smiling lady who is answering and who appears mannered because she is pretending to be a man and one is not accustomed to seeing men adopt such mannerisms. And it is perhaps more pleasant to think that for long years a certain number of angelic women have been included by mistake in the masculine sex where, in exile, ineffectually beating their wings towards men in whom they inspire a physical repulsion, they know how to arrange a drawing-room, compose "interiors." M. de Charlus was not in the least perturbed that Mme. Verdurin should be standing, and remained installed in his armchair so as to be nearer to Morel. "Don't you think it criminal," said Mme. Verdurin to the Baron, "that that creature who might be enchanting us with his violin should be sitting there at a card-table. When anyone can play the violin like that!" "He plays cards well, he does everything well, he is so intelligent," said M. de Charlus, keeping his eye on the game, so as to be able to advise Morel. This was not his only reason, however, for not rising from his chair for Mme. Verdurin. With the singular amalgam that he had made of the social conceptions at once of a great nobleman and of an amateur of art, instead of being polite in the same way that a man of his world would be, he would create a sort of tableau-vivant for himself after Saint-Simon; and at that moment was amusing himself by impersonating the Maréchal d'Uxelles, who interested him from other as-

pects also, and of whom it is said that he was so proud as to remain seated, with a pretence of laziness, before all the most distinguished persons at court. "By the way, Charlus," said Mme. Verdurin, who was beginning to grow familiar, "you don't know of any ruined old nobleman in your Faubourg who would come to me as porter?" "Why, yes . . . why, yes," replied M. de Charlus with a genial smile, "but I don't advise it." "Why not?" "I should be afraid for your sake, that your smart visitors would call at the lodge and go no farther." This was the first skirmish between them. Mme. Verdurin barely noticed it. There were to be others, alas, in Paris. M. de Charlus remained glued to his chair. He could not, moreover, restrain a faint smile, seeing how his favourite maxims as to aristocratic prestige and middle-class cowardice were confirmed by the so easily won submission of Mme. Verdurin. The Mistress appeared not at all surprised by the Baron's posture, and if she left him it was only because she had been perturbed by seeing me taken up by M. de Cambremer. But first of all, she wished to clear up the mystery of M. de Charlus's relations with Comtesse Molé. "You told me that you knew Mme. de Molé. Does that mean, you go there?" she asked, giving to the words "go there" the sense of being received there, of having received authority from the lady to go and call upon her. M. de Charlus replied with an inflexion of disdain, an affectation of precision and in a sing-song tone: "Yes, sometimes." This "sometimes" inspired doubts in Mme. Verdurin, who asked: "Have you ever met the Duc de Guermantes there?" "Ah! That I don't remember." "Oh!" said Mme. Verdurin, "you

don't know the Duc de Guermantes?" "And how should I not know him?" replied M. de Charlus, his lips curving in a smile. This smile was ironical; but as the Baron was afraid of letting a gold tooth be seen, he stopped it with a reverse movement of his lips, so that the resulting sinuosity was that of a good-natured smile. "Why do you say: 'How should I not know him?'" "Because he is my brother," said M. de Charlus carelessly, leaving Mme. Verdurin plunged in stupefaction and in the uncertainty whether her guest was making fun of her, was a natural son, or a son by another marriage. The idea that the brother of the Duc de Guermantes might be called Baron de Charlus never entered her head. She bore down upon me. "I heard M. de Cambremer invite you to dinner just now. It has nothing to do with me, you understand. But for your own sake, I do hope you won't go. For one thing, the place is infested with bores. Oh! If you like dining with provincial Counts and Marquises whom nobody knows, you will be supplied to your heart's content." "I think I shall be obliged to go there once or twice. I am not altogether free, however, for I have a young cousin whom I cannot leave by herself" (I felt that this fictitious kinship made it easier for me to take Albertine about). "But as for the Cambremers, as I have been introduced to them. . . ." "You shall do just as you please. One thing I can tell you: it's extremely unhealthy; when you have caught pneumonia, or a nice little chronic rheumatism, you'll be a lot better off!" "But isn't the place itself very pretty?" "Mmmmyesss. . . . If you like. For my part, I confess frankly that I would a hundred times rather have the view from here over this valley. To be-

gin with, if they'd paid us I wouldn't have taken the other house because the sea air is fatal to M. Verdurin. If your cousin suffers at all from nerves. . . . But you yourself have bad nerves, I think . . . you have choking fits. Very well! You shall see. Go there once, you won't sleep for a week after it; but it's not my business." And without thinking of the inconsistency with what she had just been saying: "If it would amuse you to see the house, which is not bad, pretty is too strong a word, still it is amusing with its old moat, and the old drawbridge, as I shall have to sacrifice myself and dine there once, very well, come that day, I shall try to bring all my little circle, then it will be quite nice. The day after to-morrow we are going to Harambouville in the carriage. It's a magnificent drive, the cider is delicious. Come with us. You, Brichot, you shall come too. And you too, Ski. That will make a party which, as a matter of fact, my husband must have arranged already. I don't know whom all he has invited, Monsieur de Charlus, are you one of them?" The Baron, who had not heard the whole speech, and did not know that she was talking of an excursion to Harambouville, gave a start. "A strange question," he murmured in a mocking tone by which Mme. Verdurin felt hurt. "Anyhow," she said to me, "before you dine with the Cambremers, why not bring her here, your cousin? Does she like conversation, and clever people? Is she pleasant? Yes, very well then. Bring her with you. The Cambremers aren't the only people in the world. I can understand their being glad to invite her, they must find it difficult to get anyone. Here she will have plenty of fresh air, and lots of clever men. In any case, I am counting on you not to fail me

next Wednesday. I heard you were having a tea-party at Rivebelle with your cousin, and M. de Charlus, and I forget who' else. You must arrange to bring the whole lot on here, it would be nice if you all came in a body. It's the easiest thing in the world to get here, the roads are charming; if you like I can send down for you. I can't imagine what you find attractive in Rivebelle, it's infested with mosquitoes. You are thinking perhaps of the reputation of the rock-cakes. My cook makes them far better. I can let you have them, here, Norman rock-cakes, the real article, and shortbread; I need say no more. Ah! If you like the filth they give you at Rivebelle, that I won't give you, I don't poison my guests, Sir, and even if I wished to, my cook would refuse to make such abominations and would leave my service. Those rock-cakes you get down there, you can't tell what they are made of. I knew a poor girl who got peritonitis from them, which carried her off in three days. She was only seventeen. It was sad for her poor mother," added Mme. Verdurin with a melancholy air beneath the spheres of her temples charged with experience and suffering. "However, go and have tea at Rivebelle, if you enjoy being fleeced and flinging money out of the window. But one thing I beg of you, it is a confidential mission I am charging you with, on the stroke of six, bring all your party here, don't allow them to go straggling away by themselves. You can bring whom you please. I wouldn't say that to everybody. But I am sure that your friends are nice, I can see at once that we understand one another. Apart from the little nucleus, there are some very pleasant people coming on Wednesday. You don't know little Madame de Longpont. She is

charming, and so witty, not in the least a snob, you will find, you'll like her immensely. And she's going to bring a whole troop of friends too," Mme. Verdurin added to shew me that this was the right thing to do and encourage me by the other's example. "We shall see which has most influence and brings most people, Barbe de Longpont or you. And then I believe somebody's going to bring Bergotte," she added with a vague air, this meeting with a celebrity being rendered far from likely by a paragraph which had appeared in the papers that morning, to the effect that the great writer's health was causing grave anxiety. "Anyhow, you will see that it will be one of my most successful Wednesdays, I don't want to have any boring women. You mustn't judge by this evening, it has been a complete failure. Don't try to be polite, you can't have been more bored than I was, I thought myself it was deadly. It won't always be like to-night, you know! I'm not thinking of the Cambremers, who are impossible, but I have known society people who were supposed to be pleasant, well, compared with my little nucleus, they didn't exist. I heard you say that you thought Swann clever. I must say, to my mind, his cleverness was greatly exaggerated, but without speaking of the character of the man, which I have always found fundamentally antipathetic, sly, underhand, I have often had him to dinner on Wednesdays. Well, you can ask the others, even compared with Brichot, who is far from being anything wonderful, a good assistant master, whom I got into the Institute, Swann was simply nowhere. He was so dull!" And, as I expressed a contrary opinion: "It's the truth. I don't want to say a word against him to you, since he was your friend, in-

deed he was very fond of you, he has spoken to me about you in the most charming way, but ask the others here if he ever said anything interesting, at our dinners. That, after all, is the supreme test. Well, I don't know why it was, but Swann, in my house, never seemed to come off, one got nothing out of him. And yet anything there ever was in him he picked up here." I assured her that he was highly intelligent. "No, you only think that, because you haven't known him as long as I have. One got to the end of him very soon. I was always bored to death by him." (Which may be interpreted: "He went to the La Trémoïlles and the Guermantes and knew that I didn't.") "And I can put up with anything, except being bored. That, I cannot and will not stand!" Her horror of boredom was now the reason upon which Mme. Verdurin relied to explain the composition of the little group. She did not yet entertain duchesses because she was incapable of enduring boredom, just as she was unable to go for a cruise, because of sea-sickness. I thought to myself that what Mme. Verdurin said was not entirely false, and, whereas the Guermantes would have declared Brichot to be the stupidest man they had ever met, I remained uncertain whether he were not in reality superior, if not to Swann himself, at least to the other people endowed with the wit of the Guermantes who would have had the good taste to avoid and the modesty to blush at his pedantic pleasantries; I asked myself the question as though a fresh light might be thrown on the nature of the intellect by the answer that I should make, and with the earnestness of a Christian influenced by Port-Royal when he considers the problem of Grace. "You will see," Mme. Verdurin continued, "when one

has society people together with people of real intelligence, people of our set, that's where one has to see them, the society man who is brilliant in the kingdom of the blind, is only one-eyed here. Besides, the others don't feel at home any longer. So much so that I'm inclined to ask myself whether, instead of attempting mixtures that spoil everything, I shan't start special evenings confined to the bores so as to have the full benefit of my little nucleus. However: you are coming again with your cousin. That's settled. Good. At any rate you will both find something to eat here. Féterne is starvation corner. Oh, by the way, if you like rats, go there at once, you will get as many as you want. And they will keep you there as long as you are prepared to stay. Why, you'll die of hunger. I'm sure, when I go there, I shall have my dinner before I start. The more the merrier, you must come here first and escort me. We shall have high tea, and supper when we get back. Do you like apple-tarts? Yes, very well then, our chef makes the best in the world. You see, I was quite right when I told you that you were meant to live here. So come and stay. You know, there is far more room in the house than people think. I don't speak of it, so as not to let myself in for bores. You might bring your cousin to stay. She would get a change of air from Balbec. With this air here, I maintain I can cure incurables. I have cured them, I may tell you, and not only this time. For I have stayed quite close to here before, a place I discovered and got for a mere song, a very different style of house from their Raspelière. I can shew you it if we go for a drive together. But I admit that even here the air is invigorating. Still, I don't want to say too much

about it, the whole of Paris would begin to take a fancy to my little corner. That has always been my luck. Anyhow, give your cousin my message. We shall put you in two nice rooms looking over the valley, you ought to see it in the morning, with the sun shining on the mist! By the way, who is this Robert de Saint-Loup of whom you were speaking?" she said with a troubled air, for she had heard that I was to pay him a visit at Doncières, and was afraid that he might make me fail her. "Why not bring him here instead, if he's not a bore. I have heard of him from Morel; I fancy he's one of his greatest friends," said Mme. Verdurin with entire want of truth, for Saint-Loup and Morel were not even aware of one another's existence. But having heard that Saint-Loup knew M. de Charlus, she supposed that it was through the violinist, and wished to appear to know all about them. "He's not taking up medicine, by any chance, or literature? You know, if you want any help about examinations, Cottard can do anything, and I make what use of him I please. As for the Academy later on, for I suppose he's not old enough yet, I have several votes in my pocket. Your friend would find himself on friendly soil here, and it might amuse him perhaps to see over the house. Life's not very exciting at Doncières. But you shall do just what you please, then you can arrange what you think best," she concluded, without insisting, so as not to appear to be trying to know people of noble birth, and because she always maintained that the system by which she governed the faithful, to wit despotism, was named liberty. "Why, what's the matter with you," she said, at the sight of M. Verdurin who, with gestures of impatience, was making for the wooden terrace that ran along the side of

the drawing-room above the valley, like a man who is bursting with rage and must have fresh air. "Has Saniette been annoying you again? But you know what an idiot he is, you have to resign yourself to him, don't work yourself up into such a state. I dislike this sort of thing," she said to me, "because it is bad for him, it sends the blood to his head. But I must say that one would need the patience of an angel at times to put up with Saniette, and one must always remember that it is a charity to have him in the house. For my part I must admit that he's so gloriously silly, I can't help enjoying him. I dare say you heard what he said after dinner: 'I can't play whist, but I can the piano.' Isn't it superb? It is positively colossal, and incidentally quite untrue, for he knows nothing at all about either. But my husband, beneath his rough exterior, is very sensitive, very kind-hearted, and Saniette's self-centred way of always thinking about the effect he is going to make drives him crazy. Come, dear, calm yourself, you know Cottard told you that it was bad for your liver. And it is I that will have to bear the brunt of it all," said Mme. Verdurin. "Tomorrow Saniette will come back all nerves and tears. Poor man, he is very ill indeed. Still, that is no reason why he should kill other people. Besides, even at times when he is in pain, when one would like to be sorry for him, his silliness hardens one's heart. He is really too stupid. You have only to tell him quite politely that these scenes make you both ill, and he is not to come again, since that's what he's most afraid of, it will have a soothing effect on his nerves," Mme. Verdurin whispered to her husband.

One could barely make out the sea from the windows

on the right. But those on the other side shewed the valley, now shrouded in a snowy cloak of moonlight. Now and again one heard the voices of Morel and Cottard. "You have a trump?" "Yes." "Ah! You're in luck, you are," said M. de Cambremer to Morel, in answer to his question, for he had seen that the doctor's hand was full of trumps. "Here comes the lady of diamonds," said the doctor. "That's a trump, you know? My trick. But there isn't a Sorbonne any longer," said the doctor to M. de Cambremer; "there's only the University of Paris." M. de Cambremer confessed his inability to understand why the doctor made this remark to him. "I thought you were talking about the Sorbonne," replied the doctor. "I heard you say: *tu nous la sors bonne,*" he added, with a wink, to shew that this was meant for a pun. "Just wait a moment," he said, pointing to his adversary, "I have a Trafalgar in store for him." And the prospect must have been excellent for the doctor, for in his joy his shoulders began to shake rapturously with laughter, which in his family, in the "breed" of the Cottards, was an almost zoological sign of satisfaction. In the previous generation the gesture of rubbing the hands together as though one were soaping them used to accompany this movement. Cottard himself had originally employed both forms simultaneously, but one fine day, nobody ever knew by whose intervention, wifely, professorial perhaps, the rubbing of the hands had disappeared. The doctor, even at dominoes, when he got his adversary on the run, and made him take the double six, which was to him the keenest of pleasures, contented himself with shaking his shoulders. And when—which was as seldom as possible—he went

down to his native village for a few days, and met his first cousin, who was still at the hand-rubbing stage, he would say to Mme. Cottard on his return: "I thought poor René very common." "Have you the little dee-ar?" he said, turning to Morel. "No? Then I play this old David." "Then you have five, you have won!" "That's a great victory, Doctor," said the Marquis. "A Pyrrhic victory," said Cottard, turning to face the Marquis and looking at him over his glasses to judge the effect of his remark. "If there is still time," he said to Morel, "I give you your revenge. It is my deal. Ah! no, here come the carriages, it will have to be Friday, and I shall shew you a trick you don't see every day." M. and Mme. Verdurin accompanied us to the door. The Mistress was especially coaxing with Saniette so as to make certain of his returning next time. "But you don't look to me as if you were properly wrapped up, my boy," said M. Verdurin, whose age allowed him to address me in this paternal tone. "One would say the weather had changed." These words filled me with joy, as though the profoundly hidden life, the uprising of different combinations which they implied in nature, hinted at other changes, occurring these in my own life, and created fresh possibilities in it. Merely by opening the door upon the park, before leaving, one felt that a different "weather" had, at that moment, taken possession of the scene; cooling breezes, one of the joys of summer, were rising in the fir plantation (where long ago Mme. de Cambremer had dreamed of Chopin) and almost imperceptibly, in caressing coils, capricious eddies, were beginning their gentle nocturnes. I declined the rug which, on subsequent evenings, I was to accept when Albertine

was with me, more to preserve the secrecy of my pleasure than to avoid the risk of cold. A vain search was made for the Norwegian philosopher. Had he been seized by a colic? Had he been afraid of missing the train? Had an aeroplane come to fetch him? Had he been carried aloft in an Assumption? In any case he had vanished without anyone's noticing his departure, like a god. "You are unwise," M. de Cambremer said to me, "it's as cold as charity." "Why charity?" the doctor inquired. "Beware of choking," the Marquis went on. "My sister never goes out at night. However, she is in a pretty bad state at present. In any case you oughtn't to stand about bare-headed, put your tile on at once." "They are not frigorific chokings," said Cottard sententiously. "Oh, indeed!" M. de Cambremer bowed. "Of course, if that's your opinion. . . ." "Opinions of the press!" said the doctor, smiling round his glasses. M. de Cambremer laughed, but, feeling certain that he was in the right, insisted: "All the same," he said, "whenever my sister goes out after dark, she has an attack." "It's no use quibbling," replied the doctor, regardless of his want of manners. "However, I don't practise medicine by the seaside, unless I am called in for a consultation. I am here on holiday." He was perhaps even more on holiday than he would have liked. M. de Cambremer having said to him as they got into the carriage together: "We are fortunate in having quite close to us (not on your side of the bay, on the opposite side, but it is quite narrow at that point) another medical celebrity, Doctor du Boulbon," Cottard, who, as a rule, from "deontology," abstained from criticising his colleagues, could not help exclaiming, as he had exclaimed to me on the

fatal day when we had visited the little casino: "But he is not a doctor. He practises a literary medicine, it is all fantastic therapeutics, charlatanism. All the same, we are on quite good terms. I should take the boat and go over and pay him a visit, if I weren't leaving." But, from the air which Cottard assumed in speaking of du Boulbon to M. de Cambremer, I felt that the boat which he would gladly have taken to call upon him would have greatly resembled that vessel which, in order to go and ruin the waters discovered by another literary doctor, Virgil (who took all their patients from them as well), the doctors of Salerno had chartered, but which sank with them on the voyage. "Good-bye, my dear Saniette, don't forget to come to-morrow, you know how my husband enjoys seeing you. He enjoys your wit, your intellect; yes indeed, you know quite well, he takes sudden moods, but he can't live without seeing you. It's always the first thing he asks me: 'Is Saniette coming? I do so enjoy seeing him.'" "I never said anything of the sort," said M. Verdurin to Saniette with a feigned frankness which seemed perfectly to reconcile what the Mistress had just said with the manner in which he treated Saniette. Then looking at his watch, doubtless so as not to prolong the leave-taking in the damp night air, he warned the coachmen not to lose any time, but to be careful when going down the hill, and assured us that we should be in plenty of time for our train. This was to set down the faithful, one at one station, another at another, ending with myself, for no one else was going as far as Balbec, and beginning with the Cambremers. They, so as not to bring their horses all the way up to la Raspelière at night, took the train with us at Douville-Féterne. The station near-

est to them was indeed not this, which, being already at some distance from the village, was farther still from the mansion, but la Sogne. On arriving at the station of Douville-Féterne, M. de Cambremer made a point of giving a "piece," as Françoise used to say, to the Verdurins' coachman (the nice, sensitive coachman, with melancholy thoughts), for M. de Cambremer was generous, and in that respect took, rather, "after his mamma." But, possibly because his "papa's" strain intervened at this point, he felt a scruple, or else that there might be a mistake—either on his part, if, for instance, in the dark, he were to give a sou instead of a franc, or on the recipient's who might not perceive the importance of the present that was being given him. And so he drew attention to it: "It is a franc I'm giving you, isn't it?" he said to the coachman, turning the coin until it gleamed in the lamplight, and so that the faithful might report his action to Mme. Verdurin. "Isn't it? Twenty sous is right, as it's only a short drive." He and Mme. de Cambremer left us at la Sogne. "I shall tell my sister," he repeated to me, "that you have choking fits, I am sure she will be interested." I understood that he meant: "will be pleased." As for his wife, she employed, in saying good-bye to me, two abbreviations which, even in writing, used to shock me at that time in a letter, although one has grown accustomed to them since, but which, when spoken, seem to me to-day even to contain in their deliberate carelessness, in their acquired familiarity, something insufferably pedantic: "Pleased to have met you," she said to me: "greetings to Saint-Loup, if you see him." In making this speech, Mme. de Cambremer pronounced the name "Saint-Loupe." I have

never discovered who had pronounced it thus in her hearing, or what had led her to suppose that it ought to be so pronounced. However it may be, for some weeks afterwards, she continued to say "Saint-Loupe" and a man who had a great admiration for her and echoed her in every way did the same. If other people said "Saint-Lou," they would insist, would say emphatically "Saint-Loupe," whether to teach the others an indirect lesson or to be different from them. But, no doubt, women of greater brilliance than Mme. de Cambremer told her, or gave her indirectly to understand that this was not the correct pronunciation, and that what she regarded as a sign of originality was a mistake which would make people think her little conversant with the usages of society, for shortly afterwards Mme. de Cambremer was again saying "Saint-Lou," and her admirer similarly ceased to hold out, whether because she had lectured him, or because he had noticed that she no longer sounded the final consonant, and had said to himself that if a woman of such distinction, energy and ambition had yielded, it must have been on good grounds. The worst of her admirers was her husband. Mme. de Cambremer loved to tease other people in a way that was often highly impertinent. As soon as she began to attack me, or anyone else, in this fashion, M. de Cambremer would start watching her victim, laughing the while. As the Marquis had a squint—a blemish which gives an effect of wit to the mirth even of imbeciles—the effect of this laughter was to bring a segment of pupil into the otherwise complete whiteness of his eye. So a sudden rift brings a patch of blue into an otherwise clouded sky. His monocle moreover protected, like the glass over a valuable

picture, this delicate operation. As for the actual intention of his laughter, it was hard to say whether it was friendly: "Ah! You rascal! You're in an enviable position, aren't you. You have won the favour of a lady who has a pretty wit!" Or coarse: "Well, Sir, I hope you'll learn your lesson, you've got to eat a slice of humble pie." Or obliging: "I'm here, you know, I take it with a laugh because it's all pure fun, but I shan't let you be ill-treated." Or cruelly accessory: "I don't need to add my little pinch of salt, but you can see, I'm revelling in all the insults she is showering on you. I'm wriggling like a hunchback, therefore I approve, I, the husband. And so, if you should take it into your head to answer back, you would have me to deal with, my young Sir. I should first of all give you a pair of resounding smacks, well aimed, then we should go and cross swords in the forest of Chantepie."

Whatever the correct interpretation of the husband's merriment, the wife's whimsies soon came to an end. Whereupon M. de Cambremer ceased to laugh, the temporary pupil vanished and as one had forgotten for a minute or two to expect an entirely white eyeball, it gave this ruddy Norman an air at once anaemic and ecstatic, as though the Marquis had just undergone an operation, or were imploring heaven, through his monocle, for the palms of martyrdom.

CHAPTER III

The sorrows of M. de Charlus.—His sham duel.—The stations on the "Transatlantic."—Weary of Albertine, I decide to break with her.

I WAS dropping with sleep. I was taken up to my floor not by the lift-boy, but by the squinting page, who to make conversation informed me that his sister was still with the gentleman who was so rich, and that, on one occasion, when she had made up her mind to return home instead of sticking to her business, her gentleman friend had paid a visit to the mother of the squinting page and of the other more fortunate children, who had very soon made the silly creature return to her protector. "You know, Sir, she's a fine lady, my sister is. She plays the piano, she talks Spanish. And you would never take her for the sister of the humble employee who brings you up in the lift, she denies herself nothing; Madame has a maid to herself, I shouldn't be surprised if one day she keeps her carriage. She is very pretty, if you could see her, a little too high and mighty, but, good lord, you can understand that. She's full of fun. She never leaves a hotel without doing something first in a wardrobe or a drawer, just to leave a little keepsake with the chambermaid who will have to wipe it up. Sometimes she does it in a cab, and after she's paid her fare, she'll hide behind a tree, and she doesn't half laugh when the cabby finds he's got to clean his cab after her. My father had another stroke of luck when he found my young brother that Indian Prince he used to know long ago. It's not the same style of thing, of course. But it's a superb position. The travelling by

itself would be a dream. I'm the only one still on the shelf. But you never know. We're a lucky family; perhaps one day I shall be President of the Republic. But I'm keeping you talking" (I had not uttered a single word and was beginning to fall asleep as I listened to that flow of his). "Good-night, Sir. Oh! Thank you, Sir. If everybody had as kind a heart as you, there wouldn't be any poor people left. But, as my sister says, 'there will always have to be the poor so that now that I'm rich I can s—t on them.' You'll pardon the expression. Good-night, Sir."

Perhaps every night we accept the risk of facing, while we are asleep, sufferings which we regard as unreal and unimportant because they will be felt in the course of a sleep which we suppose to be unconscious. And indeed on these evenings when I came back late from la Raspelière I was very sleepy. But after the weather turned cold I could not get to sleep at once, for the fire lighted up the room as though there were a lamp burning in it. Only it was nothing more than a blazing log, and—like a lamp too, for that matter, like the day when night gathers—its too bright light was not long in fading; and I entered a state of slumber which is like a second room that we take, into which, leaving our own room, we go when we want to sleep. It has noises of its own and we are sometimes violently awakened by the sound of a bell, perfectly heard by our ears, although nobody has rung. It has its servants, its special visitors who call to take us out so that we are ready to get up when we are compelled to realise, by our almost immediate transmigration into the other room, the room of overnight, that it is empty, that nobody has called. The race that inhabits it is, like

that of our first human ancestors, androgynous. A man in it appears a moment later in the form of a woman. Things in it shew a tendency to turn into men, men into friends and enemies. The time that elapses for the sleeper, during these spells of slumber, is absolutely different from the time in which the life of the waking man is passed. Sometimes its course is far more rapid, a quarter of an hour seems a day, at other times far longer, we think we have taken only a short nap, when we have slept through the day. Then, in the chariot of sleep, we descend into depths in which memory can no longer overtake it, and on the brink of which the mind has been obliged to retrace its steps. The horses of sleep, like those of the sun, move at so steady a pace, in an atmosphere in which there is no longer any resistance, that it requires some little aerolith extraneous to ourselves (hurled from the azure by some Unknown) to strike our regular sleep (which otherwise would have no reason to stop, and would continue with a similar motion world without end) and to make it swing sharply round, return towards reality, travel without pause, traverse the regions bordering on life in which presently the sleeper will hear the sounds that come from life, quite vague still, but already perceptible, albeit corrupted—and come to earth suddenly and awake. Then from those profound slumbers we awake in a dawn, not knowing who we are, being nobody, newly born, ready for anything, our brain being emptied of that past which was previously our life. And perhaps it is more pleasant still when our landing at the waking-point is abrupt and the thoughts of our sleep, hidden by a cloak of oblivion, have not time to return to us in order, before sleep ceases. Then, from the black

tempest through which we seem to have passed (but we do not even say *we*), we emerge prostrate, without a thought, a *we* that is void of content. What hammer-blow has the person or thing that is lying there received to make it unconscious of anything, stupefied until the moment when memory, flooding back, restores to it consciousness or personality? Moreover, for both these kinds of awakening, we must avoid falling asleep, even into deep slumber, under the law of habit. For everything that habit ensnares in her nets, she watches closely, we must escape her, take our sleep at a moment when we thought we were doing anything else than sleeping, take, in a word, a sleep that does not dwell under the tutelage of foresight, in the company, albeit latent, of reflexion. At least, in these awakenings which I have just described, and which I experienced as a rule when I had been dining overnight at la Raspelière, everything occurred as though by this process, and I can testify to it, I the strange human being who, while he waits for death to release him, lives behind closed shutters, knows nothing of the world, sits motionless as an owl, and like that bird begins to see things a little plainly only when darkness falls. Everything occurs as though by this process, but perhaps only a layer of wadding has prevented the sleeper from taking in the internal dialogue of memories and the incessant verbiage of sleep. For (and this may be equally manifest in the other system, vaster, more mysterious, more astral) at the moment of his entering the waking state, the sleeper hears a voice inside him saying: "Will you come to this dinner to-night, my dear friend, it would be such fun?" and thinks: "Yes, what fun it will be, I shall go"; then, growing wider awake, he

suddenly remembers: "My grandmother has only a few weeks to live, the Doctor assures us." He rings, he weeps at the thought that it will not be, as in the past, his grandmother, his dying grandmother, but an indifferent waiter that will come in answer to his summons. Moreover, when sleep bore him so far away from the world inhabited by memory and thought, through an ether in which he was alone, more than alone; not having that companion in whom we perceive things, ourself, he was outside the range of time and its measures. But now the waiter is in the room, and he dares not ask him the time, for he does not know whether he has slept, for how many hours he has slept (he asks himself whether it should not be how many days, returning thus with weary body and mind refreshed, his heart sick for home, as from a journey too distant not to have taken a long time). We may of course insist that there is but one time, for the futile reason that it is by looking at the clock that we have discovered to have been merely a quarter of an hour what we had supposed a day. But at the moment when we make this discovery we are a man awake, plunged in the time of waking men, we have deserted the other time. Perhaps indeed more than another time: another life. The pleasures that we enjoy in sleep, we do not include them in the list of the pleasures that we have felt in the course of our existence. To allude only to the most grossly sensual of them all, which of us, on waking, has not felt a certain irritation at having experienced in his sleep a pleasure which, if he is anxious not to tire himself, he is not, once he is awake, at liberty to repeat indefinitely during the day. It seems a positive waste. We have had pleasure, in another life, which is not ours.

Sufferings and pleasures of the dream-world (which generally vanish soon enough after our waking), if we make them figure in a budget, it is not in the current account of our life.

Two times, I have said; perhaps there is only one after all, not that the time of the waking man has any validity for the sleeper, but perhaps because the other life, the life in which he sleeps, is not—in its profounder part—included in the category of time. I came to this conclusion when on the mornings after dinners at la Raspelière I used to lie so completely asleep. For this reason. I was beginning to despair, on waking, when I found that, after I had rung the bell ten times, the waiter did not appear. At the eleventh ring he came. It was only the first after all. The other ten had been mere suggestions in my sleep which still hung about me, of the peal that I had been meaning to sound. My numbed hands had never even moved. Well, on those mornings (and this is what makes me say that sleep is perhaps unconscious of the law of time) my effort to awaken consisted chiefly in an effort to make the obscure, undefined mass of the sleep in which I had just been living enter into the scale of time. It is no easy task; sleep, which does not know whether we have slept for two hours or two days, cannot provide any indication. And if we do not find one outside, not being able to re-enter time, we fall asleep again, for five minutes which seem to us three hours.

I have always said—and have proved by experiment—that the most powerful soporific is sleep itself. After having slept profoundly for two hours, having fought against so many giants, and formed so many lifelong friendships, it is far more difficult to awake than after

taking several grammes of veronal. And so, reasoning from one thing to the other, I was surprised to hear from the Norwegian philosopher, who had it from M. Boutroux, "my eminent colleague—pardon me, my brother," what M. Bergson thought of the peculiar effects upon the memory of soporific drugs. "Naturally," M. Bergson had said to M. Boutroux, if one was to believe the Norwegian philosopher, "soporifics, taken from time to time in moderate doses, have no effect upon that solid memory of our every-day life which is so firmly established within us. But there are other forms of memory, loftier, but also more unstable. One of my colleagues lectures upon ancient history. He tells me that if, overnight, he has taken a tablet to make him sleep, he has great difficulty, during his lecture, in recalling the Greek quotations that he requires. The doctor who recommended these tablets assured him that they had no effect upon the memory. 'That is perhaps because you do not have to quote Greek,' the historian answered, not without a note of derisive pride."

I cannot say whether this conversation between M. Bergson and M. Boutroux is accurately reported. The Norwegian philosopher, albeit so profound and so lucid, so passionately attentive, may have misunderstood. Personally, in my own experience I have found the opposite result. The moments of oblivion that come to us in the morning after we have taken certain narcotics have a resemblance that is only partial, though disturbing, to the oblivion that reigns during a night of natural and profound sleep. Now what I find myself forgetting in either case is not some line of Baudelaire, which on the other hand keeps sounding in my ear, it is not some con-

cept of one of the philosophers above-named, it is the actual reality of the ordinary things that surround me—if I am asleep—my non-perception of which makes me an idiot; it is, if I am awakened and proceed to emerge from an artificial slumber, not the system of Porphyry or Plotinus, which I can discuss as fluently as at any other time, but the answer that I have promised to give to an invitation, the memory of which is replaced by a universal blank. The lofty thought remains in its place; what the soporific has put out of action is the power to act in little things, in everything that demands activity in order to seize at the right moment, to grasp some memory of every-day life. In spite of all that may be said about survival after the destruction of the brain, I observe that each alteration of the brain is a partial death. We possess all our memories, but not the faculty of recalling them, said, echoing M. Bergson, the eminent Norwegian philosopher whose language I have made no attempt to imitate in order not to prolong my story unduly. But not the faculty of recalling them. But what, then, is a memory which we do not recall? Or, indeed, let us go farther. We do not recall our memories of the last thirty years; but we are wholly steeped in them; why then stop short at thirty years, why not prolong back to before our birth this anterior life? The moment that I do not know a whole section of the memories that are behind me, the moment that they are invisible to me, that I have not the faculty of calling them to me, who can assure me that in that *mass* unknown to me there are not some that extend back much farther than my human life. If I can have in me and round me so many memories which I do not remember, this oblivion (a *de facto* oblivion, at least, since

I have not the faculty of seeing anything) may extend over a life which I have lived in the body of another man, even upon another planet. A common oblivion effaces all. But what, in that case, signifies that immortality of the soul the reality of which the Norwegian philosopher affirmed? The person that I shall be after death has no more reason to remember the man whom I have been since my birth than the latter to remember what I was before it.

The waiter came in. I did not mention to him that I had rung several times, for I was beginning to realise that hitherto I had only dreamed that I was ringing. I was alarmed nevertheless by the thought that this dream had had the clear precision of experience. Experience would, reciprocally, have the irreality of a dream.

Instead I asked him who it was that had been ringing so often during the night. He told me: "Nobody," and could prove his statement, for the bell-board would have registered any ring. And yet I could hear the repeated, almost furious peals which were still echoing in my ears and were to remain perceptible for several days. It is however seldom that sleep thus projects into our waking life memories that do not perish with it. We can count these aeroliths. If it is an idea that sleep has forged, it soon breaks up into slender, irrecoverable fragments. But, in this instance, sleep had fashioned sounds. More material and simpler, they lasted longer. I was astonished by the relative earliness of the hour, as told me by the waiter. I was none the less refreshed. It is the light sleeps that have a long duration, because, being an intermediate state between waking and sleeping, preserving a somewhat faded but permanent impression of the former,

they require infinitely more time to refresh us than a profound sleep, which may be short. I felt quite comfortable for another reason. If remembering that we are tired is enough to make us feel our tiredness, saying to oneself: "I am refreshed," is enough to create refreshment. Now I had been dreaming that M. de Charlus was a hundred and ten years old, and had just boxed the ears of his own mother, Madame Verdurin, because she had paid five thousand millions for a bunch of violets; I was therefore assured that I had slept profoundly, had dreamed the reverse of what had been in my thoughts overnight and of all the possibilities of life at the moment; this was enough to make me feel entirely refreshed.

I should greatly have astonished my mother, who could not understand M. de Charlus's assiduity in visiting the Verdurins, had I told her whom (on the very day on which Albertine's toque had been ordered, without a word about it to her, in order that it might come as a surprise) M. de Charlus had brought to dine in a private room at the Grand Hotel, Balbec. His guest was none other than the footman of a lady who was a cousin of the Cambremers. This footman was very smartly dressed, and, as he crossed the hall, with the Baron, "did the man of fashion" as Saint-Loup would have said in the eyes of the visitors. Indeed, the young page-boys, the Levites who were swarming down the temple steps at that moment because it was the time when they came on duty, paid no attention to the two strangers, one of whom, M. de Charlus, kept his eyes lowered to shew that he was paying little if any to them. He appeared to be trying to carve his way through their midst. "Prosper, dear

hope of a sacred nation," he said, recalling a passage from Racine, and applying to it a wholly different meaning. "Pardon?" asked the footman, who was not well up in the classics. M. de Charlus made no reply, for he took a certain pride in never answering questions and in marching straight ahead as though there were no other visitors in the hotel, or no one existed in the world except himself, Baron de Charlus. But, having continued to quote the speech of Josabeth: "Come, come, my children," he felt a revulsion and did not, like her, add: "Bid them approach," for these young people had not yet reached the age at which sex is completely developed, and which appealed to M. de Charlus. Moreover, if he had written to Madame de Chevregny's footman, because he had had no doubt of his docility, he had hoped to meet some one more virile. On seeing him, he found him more effeminate than he would have liked. He told him that he had been expecting some one else, for he knew by sight another of Madame de Chevregny's footmen, whom he had noticed upon the box of her carriage. This was an extremely rustic type of peasant, the very opposite of him who had come, who, on the other hand, regarding his own effeminate ways as adding to his attractiveness, and never doubting that it was this man-of-the-world air that had captivated M. de Charlus, could not even guess whom the Baron meant. "But there is no one else in the house, except one that you can't have given the eye to, he is hideous, just like a great peasant." And at the thought that it was perhaps this rustic whom the Baron had seen, he felt his self-esteem wounded. The Baron guessed this, and, widening his quest: "But I have not taken a vow that I will know only Mme. de Chevregny's

men," he said. "Surely there are plenty of fellows in one house or another here or in Paris, since you are leaving soon, that you could introduce to me?" "Oh, no!" replied the footman, "I never go with anyone of my own class. I only speak to them on duty. But there is one very nice person I can make you know." "Who?" asked the Baron. "The Prince de Guermantes." M. de Charlus was vexed at being offered only a man so advanced in years, one, moreover, to whom he had no need to apply to a footman for an introduction. And so he declined the offer in a dry tone and, not letting himself be discouraged by the menial's social pretensions, began to explain to him again what he wanted, the style, the type, a jockey, for instance, and so on. . . . Fearing lest the solicitor, who went past at that moment, might have heard them, he thought it cunning to shew that he was speaking of anything in the world rather than what his hearer might suspect, and said with emphasis and in ringing tones, but as though he were simply continuing his conversation: "Yes, in spite of my age, I still keep up a passion for collecting, a passion for pretty things, I will do anything to secure an old bronze, an early lustre. I adore the Beautiful." But to make the footman understand the change of subject he had so rapidly executed, M. de Charlus laid such stress upon each word, and what was more, to be heard by the solicitor, he shouted his words so loud that this charade should in itself have been enough to reveal what it concealed from ears more alert than those of the officer of the court. He suspected nothing, any more than any of the other residents in the hotel, all of whom saw a fashionable foreigner in the footman so smartly attired. On the other hand, if the

gentlemen were deceived and took him for a distinguished American, no sooner did he appear before the servants than he was spotted by them, as one convict recognises another, indeed scented afar off, as certain animals scent one another. The head waiters raised their eyebrows. Aimé cast a suspicious glance. The wine waiter, shrugging his shoulders, uttered behind his hand (because he thought it polite) an offensive expression which everybody heard. And even our old Françoise, whose sight was failing and who went past at that moment at the foot of the staircase to dine with the *courriers*, raised her head, recognised a servant where the hotel guests never suspected one—as the old nurse Euryclea recognises Ulysses long before the suitors seated at the banquet—and seeing, arm in arm with him, M. de Charlus, assumed an appalled expression, as though all of a sudden slanders which she had heard repeated and had not believed had acquired a heartrending probability in her eyes. She never spoke to me, nor to anyone else, of this incident, but it must have caused a considerable commotion in her brain, for afterwards, whenever in Paris she happened to see "Julien," to whom until then she had been so greatly attached, she still treated him with politeness, but with a politeness that had cooled and was always tempered with a strong dose of reserve. This same incident led some one else to confide in me: this was Aimé. When I encountered M. de Charlus, he, not having expected to meet me, raised his hand and called out "Good evening" with the indifference—outwardly, at least—of a great nobleman who believes that everything is allowed him and thinks it better not to appear to be hiding anything. Aimé who at that moment was watching him with a suspicious eye

and saw that I greeted the companion of the person in whom he was certain that he detected a servant, asked me that same evening who he was. For, for some time past, Aimé had shewn a fondness for talking, or rather, as he himself put it, doubtless in order to emphasise the character—philosophical, according to him—of these talks, "discussing" with me. And as I often said to him that it distressed me that he should have to stand beside the table while I ate instead of being able to sit down and share my meal, he declared that he had never seen a guest shew such "sound reasoning." He was talking at that moment to two waiters. They had bowed to me, I did not know why their faces were unfamiliar, albeit their conversation sounded a note which seemed to me not to be novel. Aimé was scolding them both because of their matrimonial engagements, of which he disapproved. He appealed to me, I said that I could not have any opinion on the matter since I did not know them. They told me their names, reminded me that they had often waited upon me at Rivebelle. But one had let his moustache grow, the other had shaved his off and had had his head cropped; and for this reason, albeit it was the same head as before that rested upon the shoulders of each of them (and not a different head as in the faulty restorations of Notre-Dame), it had remained almost as invisible to me as those objects which escape the most minute search and are actually staring everybody in the face where nobody notices them, on the mantelpiece. As soon as I knew their names, I recognised exactly the uncertain music of their voices because I saw once more the old face which made it clear. "They want to get married and they haven't even learned English!" Aimé said to

me, without reflecting that I was little versed in the ways of hotel service, and could not be aware that a person who does not know foreign languages cannot be certain of getting a situation. I, who supposed that he would have no difficulty in finding out that the newcomer was M. de Charlus, and indeed imagined that he must remember him, having waited upon him in the dining-room when the Baron came, during my former visit to Balbec, to see Mme. de Villeparisis, I told him his name. Not only did Aimé not remember the Baron de Charlus, but the name appeared to make a profound impression upon him. He told me that he would look for a letter next day in his room which I might perhaps be able to explain to him. I was all the more astonished in that M. de Charlus, when he had wished to give me one of Bergotte's books, at Balbec, the other year, had specially asked for Aimé, whom he must have recognised later on in that Paris restaurant where I had taken luncheon with Saint-Loup and his mistress and where M. de Charlus had come to spy upon us. It is true that Aimé had not been able to execute these commissions in person, being on the former occasion in bed, and on the latter engaged in waiting. I had nevertheless grave doubts as to his sincerity, when he pretended not to know M. de Charlus. For one thing, he must have appealed to the Baron. Like all the upstairs waiters of the Balbec Hotel, like several of the Prince de Guermantes's footmen, Aimé belonged to a race more ancient than that of the Prince, therefore more noble. When you asked for a sitting-room, you thought at first that you were alone. But presently, in the service-room you caught sight of a sculptural waiter, of that ruddy Etruscan kind of which Aimé was typical, slightly

aged by excessive consumption of champagne and seeing the inevitable hour approach for Contrexéville water. Not all the visitors asked them merely to wait upon them. The underlings who were young, conscientious, busy, who had mistresses waiting for them outside, made off. Whereupon Aimé reproached them with not being serious. He had every right to do so. He himself was serious. He had a wife and children, and was ambitious on their behalf. And so the advances made to him by a strange lady or gentleman he never repulsed, though it meant his staying all night. For business must come before everything. He was so much of the type that attracted M. de Charlus that I suspected him of falsehood when he told me that he did not know him. I was wrong. The page had been perfectly truthful when he told the Baron that Aimé (who had given him a dressing-down for it next day) had gone to bed (or gone out), and on the other occasion was busy waiting. But imagination outreaches reality. And the page-boy's embarrassment had probably aroused in M. de Charlus doubts as to the sincerity of his excuses that had wounded sentiments of which Aimé had no suspicion. We have seen moreover that Saint-Loup had prevented Aimé from going out to the carriage in which M. de Charlus, who had managed somehow or other to discover the waiter's new address, received a further disappointment. Aimé, who had not noticed him, felt an astonishment that may be imagined when, on the evening of that very day on which I had taken luncheon with Saint-Loup and his mistress, he received a letter sealed with the Guermantes arms, from which I shall quote a few passages here as an example of unilateral insanity in an intelligent man addressing an

imbecile endowed with sense. "Sir, I have been unsuccessful, notwithstanding efforts that would astonish many people who have sought in vain to be greeted and welcomed by myself, in persuading you to listen to certain explanations which you have not asked of me but which I have felt it to be incumbent upon my dignity and your own to offer you. I am going therefore to write down here what it would have been more easy to say to you in person. I shall not conceal from you that, the first time that I set eyes upon you at Balbec, I found your face frankly antipathetic." Here followed reflexions upon the resemblance—remarked only on the following day—to a deceased friend to whom M. de Charlus had been deeply attached. "The thought then suddenly occurred to me that you might, without in any way encroaching upon the demands of your profession, come to see me and, by joining me in the card games with which his mirth used to dispel my gloom, give me the illusion that he was not dead. Whatever the nature of the more or less fatuous suppositions which you probably formed, suppositions more within the mental range of a servant (who does not even deserve the name of servant since he has declined to serve) than the comprehension of so lofty a sentiment, you probably thought that you were giving yourself importance, knowing not who I was nor what I was, by sending word to me, when I asked you to fetch me a book, that you were in bed; but it is a mistake to imagine that impolite behaviour ever adds to charm, in which you moreover are entirely lacking. I should have ended matters there had I not, by chance, the following morning, found an opportunity of speaking to you. Your resemblance to my poor friend was so accentuated, ban-

ishing even the intolerable protuberance of your too prominent chin, that I realised that it was the deceased who at that moment was lending you his own kindly expression so as to permit you to regain your hold over me and to prevent you from missing the unique opportunity that was being offered you. Indeed, although I have no wish, since there is no longer any object and it is unlikely that I shall meet you again in this life, to introduce coarse questions of material interest, I should have been only too glad to obey the prayer of my dead friend (for I believe in the Communion of Saints and in their deliberate intervention in the destiny of the living), that I should treat you as I used to treat him, who had his carriage, his servants, and to whom it was quite natural that I should consecrate the greater part of my fortune since I loved him as a father loves his son. You have decided otherwise. To my request that you should fetch me a book you sent the reply that you were obliged to go out. And this morning when I sent to ask you to come to my carriage, you then, if I may so speak without blasphemy, denied me for the third time. You will excuse my not enclosing in this envelope the lavish gratuity which I intended to give you at Balbec and to which it would be too painful to me to restrict myself in dealing with a person with whom I had thought for a moment of sharing all that I possess. At least you might spare me the trouble of making a fourth vain attempt to find you at your restaurant, to which my patience will not extend." (Here M. de Charlus gave his address, stated the hours at which he would be at home, etc.) "Farewell, Sir. Since I assume that, resembling so strongly the friend whom I have lost, you cannot be entirely stupid, other-

wise physiognomy would be a false science, I am convinced that if, one day, you think of this incident again, it will not be without feeling some regret and some remorse. For my part, believe that I am quite sincere in saying that I retain no bitterness. I should have preferred that we should part with a less unpleasant memory than this third futile endeavour. It will soon be forgotten. We are like those vessels which you must often have seen at Balbec, which have crossed one another's course for a moment; it might have been to the advantage of each of them to stop; but one of them has decided otherwise; presently they will no longer even see one another on the horizon and their meeting is a thing out of mind; but, before this final parting, each of them salutes the other, and so at this point, Sir, wishing you all good fortune, does

THE BARON DE CHARLUS."

Aimé had not even read this letter through, being able to make nothing of it and suspecting a hoax. When I had explained to him who the Baron was, he appeared to be lost in thought and to be feeling the regret that M. de Charlus had anticipated. I would not be prepared to swear that he would not at that moment have written a letter of apology to a man who gave carriages to his friends. But in the interval M. de Charlus had made Morel's acquaintance. It was true that, his relations with Morel being possibly Platonic, M. de Charlus occasionally sought to spend an evening in company such as that in which I had just met him in the hall. But he was no longer able to divert from Morel the violent sentiment which, at liberty a few years earlier, had asked nothing better than to fasten itself upon Aimé and had dictated

the letter which had distressed me, for its writer's sake, when the head waiter shewed me it. It was, in view of the anti-social nature of M. de Charlus's love, a more striking example of the insensible, sweeping force of these currents of passion by which the lover, like a swimmer, is very soon carried out of sight of land. No doubt the love of a normal man may also, when the lover, by the successive invention of his desires, regrets, disappointments, plans, constructs a whole romance about a woman whom he does not know, allow the two legs of the compass to gape at a quite remarkably wide angle. All the same, such an angle was singularly enlarged by the character of a passion which is not generally shared and by the difference in social position between M. de Charlus and Aimé.

Every day I went out with Albertine. She had decided to take up painting again and had chosen as the subject of her first attempts the church of Saint-Jean de la Haise which nobody ever visited and very few had even heard of, a spot difficult to describe, impossible to discover without a guide, slow of access in its isolation, more than half an hour from the Epreville station, after one had long left behind one the last houses of the village of Quetteholme. As to the name Epreville I found that the curé's book and Brichot's information were at variance. According to one, Epreville was the ancient Sprevilla; the other derived the name from Aprivilla. On our first visit we took a little train in the opposite direction from Féterne, that is to say towards Grattevast. But we were in the dog days and it had been a terrible strain simply to go out of doors immediately after luncheon. I should have preferred not to start so soon; the luminous

and burning air provoked thoughts of indolence and cool retreats. It filled my mother's room and mine, according to their exposure, at varying temperatures, like rooms in a Turkish bath. Mamma's dressing-room, festooned by the sun with a dazzling, Moorish whiteness, appeared to be sunk at the bottom of a well, because of the four plastered walls on which it looked out, while far above, in the empty space, the sky, whose fleecy white waves one saw slip past, one behind another, seemed (because of the longing that one felt), whether built upon a terrace or seen reversed in a mirror hung above the window, a tank filled with blue water, reserved for bathers. Notwithstanding this scorching temperature, we had taken the one o'clock train. But Albertine had been very hot in the carriage, hotter still in the long walk across country, and I was afraid of her catching cold when she proceeded to sit still in that damp hollow where the sun's rays did not penetrate. Having, on the other hand, as long ago as our first visits to Elstir, made up my mind that she would appreciate not merely luxury but even a certain degree of comfort of which her want of money deprived her, I had made arrangements with a Balbec jobmaster that a carriage was to be sent every day to take us out. To escape from the heat we took the road through the forest of Chantepie. The invisibility of the innumerable birds, some of them almost sea-birds, that conversed with one another from the trees on either side of us, gave the same impression of repose that one has when one shuts one's eyes. By Albertine's side, enchained by her arms within the carriage, I listened to these Oceanides. And when by chance I caught sight of one of these musicians as he flitted from one leaf to

the shelter of another, there was so little apparent connexion between him and his songs that I could not believe that I beheld their cause in the little body, fluttering, humble, startled and unseeing. The carriage could not take us all the way to the church. I stopped it when we had passed through Quetteholme and bade Albertine good-bye. For she had alarmed me by saying to me of this church as of other buildings, of certain pictures: "What a pleasure it would be to see that with you!" This pleasure was one that I did not feel myself capable of giving her. I felt it myself in front of beautiful things only if I was alone or pretended to be alone and did not speak. But since she supposed that she might, thanks to me, feel sensations of art which are not communicated thus—I thought it more prudent to say that I must leave her, would come back to fetch her at the end of the day, but that in the mean time I must go back with the carriage to pay a call on Mme. Verdurin or on the Cambremers, or even spend an hour with Mamma at Balbec, but never farther afield. To begin with, that is to say. For, Albertine having once said to me petulantly: "It's a bore that Nature has arranged things so badly and put Saint-Jean de la Haise in one direction, la Raspelière in another, so that you're imprisoned for the whole day in the part of the country you've chosen;" as soon as the toque and veil had come I ordered, to my eventual undoing, a motor-car from Saint-Fargeau (*Sanctus Ferreolus,* according to the curé's book). Albertine, whom I had kept in ignorance and who had come to call for me, was surprised when she heard in front of the hotel the purr of the engine, delighted when she learned that this motor was for ourselves. I made her come upstairs for

a moment to my room. She jumped for joy. "We are going to pay a call on the Verdurins." "Yes, but you'd better not go dressed like that since you are going to have your motor. There, you will look better in these." And I brought out the toque and veil which I had hidden. "They're for me? Oh! You are an angel," she cried, throwing her arms round my neck. Aimé who met us on the stairs, proud of Albertine's smart attire and of our means of transport, for these vehicles were still comparatively rare at Balbec, gave himself the pleasure of coming downstairs behind us. Albertine, anxious to display herself in her new garments, asked me to have the car opened, as we could shut it later on when we wished to be more private. "Now then," said Aimé to the driver, with whom he was not acquainted and who had not stirred, "don't you (*tu*) hear, you're to open your roof?" For Aimé, sophisticated by hotel life, in which moreover he had won his way to exalted rank, was not as shy as the cab driver to whom Françoise was a "lady"; notwithstanding the want of any formal introduction, plebeians whom he had never seen before he addressed as *tu,* though it was hard to say whether this was aristocratic disdain on his part or democratic fraternity. "I am engaged," replied the chauffeur, who did not know me by sight. "I am ordered for Mlle. Simonet. I can't take this gentleman." Aimé burst out laughing: "Why, you great pumpkin," he said to the driver, whom he at once convinced, "this is Mademoiselle Simonet, and Monsieur, who tells you to open the roof of your car, is the person who has engaged you." And as Aimé, although personally he had no feeling for Albertine, was for my sake proud of the garments she was wearing, he

whispered to the chauffeur: "Don't get the chance of driving a Princess like that every day, do you?" On this first occasion it was not I alone that was able to go to la Raspelière as I did on other days, while Albertine painted; she decided to go there with me. She did indeed think that we might stop here and there on our way, but supposed it to be impossible to start by going to Saint-Jean de la Haise. That is to say in another direction, and to make an excursion which seemed to be reserved for a different day. She learned on the contrary from the driver that nothing could be easier than to go to Saint-Jean, which he could do in twenty minutes, and that we might stay there if we chose for hours, or go on much farther, for from Quetteholme to la Raspelière would not take more than thirty-five minutes. We realised this as soon as the vehicle, starting off, covered in one bound twenty paces of an excellent horse. Distances are only the relation of space to time and vary with that relation. We express the difficulty that we have in getting to a place in a system of miles or kilometres which becomes false as soon as that difficulty decreases. Art is modified by it also, when a village which seemed to be in a different world from some other village becomes its neighbour in a landscape whose dimensions are altered. In any case the information that there may perhaps exist a universe in which two and two make five and the straight line is not the shortest way between two points would have astonished Albertine far less than to hear the driver say that it was easy to go in a single afternoon to Saint-Jean and la Raspelière, Douville and Quetteholme, Saint-Mars le Vieux and Saint-Mars le Vêtu, Gourville and Old Balbec, Tourville and Féterne, prisoners hitherto as her-

metically confined in the cells of distinct days as long ago were Méséglise and Guermantes, upon which the same eyes could not gaze in the course of one afternoon, delivered now by the giant with the seven-league boots, came and clustered about our tea-time their towers and steeples, their old gardens which the encroaching wood sprang back to reveal.

Coming to the foot of the cliff road, the car took it in its stride, with a continuous sound like that of a knife being ground, while the sea falling away grew broader beneath us. The old rustic houses of Montsurvent ran towards us, clasping to their bosoms vine or rose-bush; the firs of la Raspelière, more agitated than when the evening breeze was rising, ran in every direction to escape from us and a new servant whom I had never seen before came to open the door for us on the terrace, while the gardener's son, betraying a precocious bent, devoured the machine with his gaze. As it was not a Monday we did not know whether we should find Mme. Verdurin, for except upon that day, when she was at home, it was unsafe to call upon her without warning. No doubt she was "principally" at home, but this expression, which Mme. Swann employed at the time when she too was seeking to form her little clan, and to draw visitors to herself without moving towards them, an expression which she interpreted as meaning "on principle," meant no more than "as a general rule," that is to say with frequent exceptions. For not only did Mme. Verdurin like going out, but she carried her duties as a hostess to extreme lengths, and when she had had people to luncheon, immediately after the coffee, liqueurs and cigarettes (notwithstanding the first somnolent effects of the heat and of di-

gestion in which they would have preferred to watch through the leafy boughs of the terrace the Jersey packet passing over the enamelled sea), the programme included a series of excursions in the course of which her guests, installed by force in carriages, were conveyed, willy-nilly, to look at one or other of the views that abound in the neighbourhood of Douville. This second part of the entertainment was, as it happened (once the effort to rise and enter the carriage had been made), no less satisfactory than the other to the guests, already prepared by the succulent dishes, the vintage wines or sparkling cider to let themselves be easily intoxicated by the purity of the breeze and the magnificence of the views. Mme. Verdurin used to make strangers visit these rather as though they were portions (more or less detached) of her property, which you could not help going to see the moment you came to luncheon with her and which conversely you would never have known had you not been entertained by the Mistress. This claim to arrogate to herself the exclusive right over walks and drives, as over Morel's and formerly Dechambre's playing, and to compel the landscapes to form part of the little clan was not for that matter so absurd as it appears at first sight. Mme. Verdurin deplored the want of taste which, according to her, the Cambremers shewed in the furnishing of la Raspelière and the arrangement of the garden, but still more their want of initiative in the excursions that they took or made their guests take in the surrounding country. Just as, according to her, la Raspelière was only beginning to become what it should always have been now that it was the asylum of the little clan, so she insisted that the Cambremers, perpetually exploring in their barouche, along

the railway line, by the shore, the one ugly road that there was in the district, had been living in the place all their lives but did not know it. There was a grain of truth in this assertion. From force of habit, lack of imagination, want of interest in a country which seemed hackneyed because it was so near, the Cambremers when they left their home went always to the same places and by the same roads. To be sure they laughed heartily at the Verdurins' offer to shew them their native country. But when it came to that, they and even their coachman would have been incapable of taking us to the splendid, more or less secret places, to which M. Verdurin brought us, now forcing the barrier of a private but deserted property upon which other people would not have thought it possible to venture, now leaving the carriage to follow a path which was not wide enough for wheeled traffic, but in either case with the certain recompense of a marvellous view. Let us say in passing that the garden at la Raspelière was in a sense a compendium of all the excursions to be made in a radius of many miles. For one thing because of its commanding position, overlooking on one side the valley, on the other the sea, and also because, on one and the same side, the seaward side for instance, clearings had been made through the trees in such a way that from one point you embraced one horizon, from another another. There was at each of these points of view a bench; you went and sat down in turn upon the bench from which there was the view of Balbec, or Parville, or Douville. Even to command a single view one bench would have been placed more or less on the edge of the cliff, another farther back. From the latter you had a foreground of verdure and a horizon which seemed al-

ready the vastest imaginable, but which became infinitely larger if, continuing along a little path, you went to the next bench from which you scanned the whole amphitheatre of the sea. There you could make out exactly the sound of the waves which did not penetrate to the more secluded parts of the garden, where the sea was still visible but no longer audible. These resting-places bore at la Raspelière among the occupants of the house the name of "views." And indeed they assembled round the mansion the finest views of the neighbouring places, coastline or forest, seen greatly diminished by distance, as Hadrian collected in his villa reduced models of the most famous monuments of different countries. The name that followed the word "view" was not necessarily that of a place on the coast, but often that of the opposite shore of the bay which you could make out, standing out in a certain relief notwithstanding the extent of the panorama. Just as you took a book from M. Verdurin's library to go and read for an hour at the "view of Balbec," so if the sky was clear the liqueurs would be served at the "view of Rivebelle," on condition however that the wind was not too strong, for, in spite of the trees planted on either side, the air up there was keen. To come back to the carriage parties that Mme. Verdurin used to organise for the afternoons, the Mistress, if on her return she found the cards of some social butterfly "on a flying visit to the coast," would pretend to be overjoyed, but was actually broken-hearted at having missed his visit and (albeit people at this date came only to "see the house" or to make the acquaintance for a day of a woman whose artistic salon was famous, but outside the pale in Paris) would at once make M. Verdurin invite him to

dine on the following Wednesday. As the tourist was often obliged to leave before that day, or was afraid to be out late, Mme. Verdurin had arranged that on Mondays she was always to be found at teatime. These tea-parties were not at all large, and I had known more brilliant gatherings of the sort in Paris, at the Princesse de Guermantes's, at Mme. de Gallifet's or Mme. d'Arpajon's. But this was not Paris, and the charm of the setting enhanced, in my eyes, not merely the pleasantness of the party but the merits of the visitors. A meeting with some social celebrity, which in Paris would have given me no pleasure, but which at la Raspelière, whither he had come from a distance by Féterne or the forest of Chantepie, changed in character, in importance, became an agreeable incident. Sometimes it was a person whom I knew quite well and would not have gone a yard to meet at the Swanns. But his name sounded differently upon this cliff, like the name of an actor whom one has constantly heard in a theatre, printed upon the announcement, in a different colour, of an extraordinary and gala performance, where his notoriety is suddenly multiplied by the unexpectedness of the rest. As in the country people behave without ceremony, the social celebrity often took it upon him to bring the friends with whom he was staying, murmuring the excuse in Mme. Verdurin's ear that he could not leave them behind as he was living in their house; to his hosts on the other hand he pretended to offer, as a sort of courtesy, the distraction, in a monotonous seaside life, of being taken to a centre of wit and intellect, of visiting a magnificent mansion and of making an excellent tea. This composed at once an assembly of several persons of semi-distinction; and if a little slice of

garden with a few trees, which would seem shabby in the country, acquires an extraordinary charm in the Avenue Gabriel or let us say the Rue de Monceau, where only multi-millionaires can afford such a luxury, inversely gentlemen who are of secondary importance at a Parisian party stood out at their full value on a Monday afternoon at la Raspelière. No sooner did they sit down at the table covered with a cloth embroidered in red, beneath the painted panels, to partake of the rock cakes, Norman puff pastry, tartlets shaped like boats filled with cherries like beads of coral, "diplomatic" cakes, than these guests were subjected, by the proximity of the great bowl of azure upon which the window opened, and which you could not help seeing when you looked at them, to a profound alteration, a transmutation which changed them into something more precious than before. What was more, even before you set eyes on them, when you came on a Monday to Mme. Verdurin's, people who in Paris would scarcely turn their heads to look, so familiar was the sight of a string of smart carriages waiting outside a great house, felt their hearts throb at the sight of the two or three broken-down dog-carts drawn up in front of la Raspelière, beneath the tall firs. No doubt this was because the rustic setting was different, and social impressions thanks to this transposition regained a kind of novelty. It was also because the broken-down carriage that one hired to pay a call upon Mme. Verdurin called to mind a pleasant drive and a costly bargain struck with a coachman who had demanded "so much" for the whole day. But the slight stir of curiosity with regard to fresh arrivals, whom it was still impossible to distinguish, made everybody ask himself: "Who can this be?" a question

which it was difficult to answer, when one did not know who might have come down to spend a week with the Cambremers or elsewhere, but which people always enjoy putting to themselves in rustic, solitary lives where a meeting with a human creature whom one has not seen for a long time ceases to be the tiresome affair that it is in the life of Paris, and forms a delicious break in the empty monotony of lives that are too lonely, in which even the postman's knock becomes a pleasure. And on the day on which we arrived in a motor-car at la Raspelière, as it was not Monday, M. and Mme. Verdurin must have been devoured by that craving to see people which attacks men and women and inspires a longing to throw himself out of the window in the patient who has been shut up away from his family and friends, for a cure of strict isolation. For the new and more swift-footed servant, who had already made himself familiar with these expressions, having replied that "if Madame has not gone out she must be at the view of Douville," and that he would go and look for her, came back immediately to tell us that she was coming to welcome us. We found her slightly dishevelled, for she came from the flower beds, farmyard and kitchen garden, where she had gone to feed her peacocks and poultry, to hunt for eggs, to gather fruit and flowers to "make her table-centre," which would suggest her park in miniature; but on the table it conferred the distinction of making it support the burden of only such things as were useful and good to eat; for round those other presents from the garden which were the pears, the whipped eggs, rose the tall stems of bugloss, carnations, roses and coreopsis, between which one saw, as between blossoming boundary posts, move

from one to another beyond the glazed windows, the ships at sea. From the astonishment which M. and Mme. Verdurin, interrupted while arranging their flowers to receive the visitors that had been announced, shewed upon finding that these visitors were merely Albertine and myself, it was easy to see that the new servant, full of zeal but not yet familiar with my name, had repeated it wrongly and that Mme. Verdurin, hearing the names of guests whom she did not know, had nevertheless bidden him let them in, in her need of seeing somebody, no matter whom. And the new servant stood contemplating this spectacle from the door in order to learn what part we played in the household. Then he made off at a run, taking long strides, for he had entered upon his duties only the day before. When Albertine had quite finished displaying her toque and veil to the Verdurins, she gave me a warning look to remind me that we had not too much time left for what we meant to do. Mme. Verdurin begged us to stay to tea, but we refused, when all of a sudden a suggestion was mooted which would have made an end of all the pleasures that I promised myself from my drive with Albertine: the Mistress, unable to face the thought of tearing herself from us, or perhaps of allowing a novel distraction to escape, decided to accompany us. Accustomed for years past to the experience that similar offers on her part were not well received, and being probably dubious whether this offer would find favour with us, she concealed beneath an excessive assurance the timidity that she felt when addressing us and, without even appearing to suppose that there could be any doubt as to our answer, asked us no question, but said to her husband, speaking of Albertine and myself, as

MADAME VERDURIN GREETS ALBERTINE

though she were conferring a favour on us: "I shall see them home, myself." At the same time there hovered over her lips a smile that did not belong to them, a smile which I had already seen on the faces of certain people when they said to Bergotte with a knowledgeable air: "I have bought your book, it's not bad," one of those collective, universal smiles which, when they feel the need of them—as we make use of railways and removal vans—individuals borrow, except a few who are extremely refined, like Swann or M. de Charlus on whose lips I have never seen that smile settle. From that moment my visit was poisoned. I pretended not to have understood. A moment later it became evident that M. Verdurin was to be one of the party. "But it will be too far for M. Verdurin," I objected. "Not at all," replied Mme. Verdurin with a condescending, cheerful air, "he says it will amuse him immensely to go with you young people over a road he has travelled so many times; if necessary, he will sit beside the engineer, that doesn't frighten him, and we shall come back quietly by the train like a good married couple. Look at him, he's quite delighted." She seemed to be speaking of an aged and famous painter full of friendliness, who, younger than the youngest, takes a delight in scribbling figures on paper to make his grandchildren laugh. What added to my sorrow was that Albertine seemed not to share it and to find some amusement in the thought of dashing all over the countryside like this with the Verdurins. As for myself, the pleasure that I had vowed that I would take with her was so imperious that I refused to allow the Mistress to spoil it; I invented falsehoods which the irritating threats of Mme. Verdurin made excusable, but which Albertine,

alas, contradicted. "But we have a call to pay," I said. "What call?" asked Albertine. "You shall hear about it later, there's no getting out of it." "Very well, we can wait outside," said Mme. Verdurin, resigned to anything. At the last minute my anguish at seeing wrested from me a happiness for which I had so longed gave me the courage to be impolite. I refused point blank, alleging in Mme. Verdurin's ear that because of some trouble which had befallen Albertine and about which she wished to consult me, it was absolutely necessary that I should be alone with her. The Mistress appeared vexed: "All right, we shan't come," she said to me in a voice tremulous with rage. I felt her to be so angry that, so as to appear to be giving way a little: "But we might perhaps . . ." I began. "No," she replied, more furious than ever, "when I say no, I mean no." I supposed that I was out of favour with her, but she called us back at the door to urge us not to "fail" on the following Wednesday, and not to come with that contraption, which was dangerous at night, but by the train with the little group, and she made me stop the car, which was moving down hill across the park, because the footman had forgotten to put in the hood the slice of tart and the shortbread which she had had made into a parcel for us. We started off, escorted for a moment by the little houses that came running to meet us with their flowers. The face of the countryside seemed to us entirely changed, so far, in the topographical image that we form in our minds of separate places, is the notion of space from being the most important factor. We have said that the notion of time segregates them even farther. It is not the only factor either. Certain places which we see always in isolation

seem to us to have no common measure with the rest, to be almost outside the world, like those people whom we have known in exceptional periods of our life, during our military service, in our childhood, and whom we associate with nothing. In my first year at Balbec there was a piece of high ground to which Mme. de Villeparisis liked to take us because from it you saw only the water and the woods, and which was called Beaumont. As the road that she took to approach it, and preferred to other routes because of its old trees, went up hill all the way, her carriage was obliged to go at a crawling pace and took a very long time. When we reached the top we used to alight, stroll about for a little, get into the carriage again, return by the same road, without seeing a single village, a single country house. I knew that Beaumont was something very special, very remote, very high, I had no idea of the direction in which it was to be found, having never taken the Beaumont road to go anywhere else; besides, it took a very long time to get there in a carriage. It was obviously in the same Department (or in the same Province) as Balbec, but was situated for me on another plane, enjoyed a special privilege of extra-territoriality. But the motor-car respects no mystery, and, having passed beyond Incarville, whose houses still danced before my eyes, as we were going down the cross road that leads to Parville (*Paterni villa*), catching sight of the sea from a natural terrace over which we were passing, I asked the name of the place, and before the chauffeur had time to reply recognised Beaumont, close by which I passed thus unconsciously whenever I took the little train, for it was within two minutes of Parville. Like an officer of my regiment who might have seemed to

me a creature apart, too kindly and simple to be of a great family, too remote already and mysterious to be simply of a great family, and of whom I was afterwards to learn that he was the brother-in-law, the cousin of people with whom I was dining, so Beaumont, suddenly brought in contact with places from which I supposed it to be so distinct, lost its mystery and took its place in the district, making me think with terror that Madame Bovary and the Sanseverina might perhaps have seemed to me to be like ordinary people, had I met them elsewhere than in the close atmosphere of a novel. It may be thought that my love of magic journeys by train ought to have prevented me from sharing Albertine's wonder at the motor-car which takes even the invalid wherever he wishes to go and destroys our conception—which I had held hitherto—of position in space as the individual mark, the irreplaceable essence of irremovable beauties. And no doubt this position in space was not to the motor-car, as it had been to the railway train, when I came from Paris to Balbec, a goal exempt from the contingencies of ordinary life, almost ideal at the moment of departure, and, as it remains so at that of arrival, at our arrival in that great dwelling where no one dwells and which bears only the name of the town, the station, seeming to promise at last the accessibility of the town, as though the station were its materialisation. No, the motor-car did not convey us thus by magic into a town which we saw at first in the whole that is summarised by its name, and with the illusions of a spectator in a theatre. It made us enter that theatre by the wings which were the streets, stopped to ask the way of an inhabitant. But, as a compensation for so familiar a progress one has the gropings

of the chauffeur uncertain of his way and retracing his course, the "general post" of perspective which sets a castle dancing about with a hill, a church and the sea, while one draws nearer to it, in spite of its vain efforts to hide beneath its primeval foliage; those ever narrowing circles which the motor-car describes round a spellbound town which darts off in every direction to escape it and upon which finally it drops down, straight, into the heart of the valley where it lies palpitating on the ground; so that this position in space, this unique point, which the motor-car seems to have stripped of the mystery of express trains, it gives us on the contrary the impression of discovering, of determining for ourselves as with a compass, of helping us to feel with a more fondly exploring hand, with a finer precision, the true geometry, the fair proportions of the earth.

What unfortunately I did not know at that moment and did not learn until more than two years later was that one of the chauffeur's patrons was M. de Charlus, and that Morel, instructed to pay him and keeping part of the money for himself (making the chauffeur triple and quintuple the mileage), had become very friendly with him (while pretending not to know him before other people) and made use of his car for long journeys. If I had known this at the time, and that the confidence which the Verdurins were presently to feel in this chauffeur came, unknown to them, from that source, perhaps many of the sorrows of my life in Paris, in the year that followed, much of my trouble over Albertine would have been avoided, but I had not the slightest suspicion of it. In themselves M. de Charlus's excursions by motor-car with Morel were of no direct interest to me. They were more-

over confined as a rule to a luncheon or dinner in some restaurant along the coast where M. de Charlus was regarded as an old and penniless servant and Morel, whose duty it was to pay the bill, as a too kind-hearted gentleman. I report the conversation at one of these meals, which may give an idea of the others. It was in a restaurant of elongated shape at Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu. "Can't you get them to remove this thing?" M. de Charlus asked Morel, as though appealing to an intermediary without having to address the staff directly. "This thing" was a vase containing three withered roses with which a well-meaning head waiter had seen fit to decorate the table. "Yes . . ." said Morel in embarrassment. "You don't like roses?" "My request ought on the contrary to prove that I do like them, since there are no roses here" (Morel appeared surprised) "but as a matter of fact I do not care much for them. I am rather sensitive to names; and whenever a rose is at all beautiful, one learns that it is called Baronne de Rothschild or Maréchale Niel, which casts a chill. Do you like names? Have you found beautiful titles for your little concert numbers?" "There is one that is called *Poème triste.*" "That is horrible," replied M. de Charlus in a shrill voice that rang out like a blow. "But I ordered champagne?" he said to the head waiter who had supposed he was obeying the order by placing by the diners two glasses of foaming liquid. "Yes, Sir." "Take away that filth, which has no connexion with the worst champagne in the world. It is the emetic known as *cup,* which consists, as a rule, of three rotten strawberries swimming in a mixture of vinegar and soda-water. Yes," he went on, turning again to Morel, "you don't seem to know

what a title is. And even in the interpretation of the things you play best, you seem not to be aware of the mediumistic side." "You mean to say?" asked Morel, who, not having understood one word of what the Baron had said, was afraid that he might be missing something of importance, such as an invitation to luncheon. M. de Charlus having failed to regard "You mean to say?" as a question, Morel, having in consequence received no answer, thought it best to change the conversation and to give it a sensual turn: "There, look at the fair girl selling the flowers you don't like; I'm certain she's got a little mistress. And the old woman dining at the table at the end, too." "But how do you know all that?" asked M. de Charlus, amazed at Morel's intuition. "Oh! I can spot them in an instant. If we went out together in a crowd, you would see that I never make a mistake." And anyone looking at Morel at that moment, with his girlish air enshrined in his masculine beauty, would have understood the obscure divination which made him no less obvious to certain women than them to him. He was anxious to supplant Jupien, vaguely desirous of adding to his regular income the profits which, he supposed, the tailor derived from the Baron. "And with boys I am surer still, I could save you from making any mistake. We shall be having the fair soon at Balbec, we shall find lots of things there. And in Paris too, you'll see, you'll have a fine time." But the inherited caution of a servant made him give a different turn to the sentence on which he had already embarked. So that M. de Charlus supposed that he was still referring to girls. "Listen," said Morel, anxious to excite in a fashion which he considered less compromising for himself (albeit it was actually

more immoral) the Baron's senses, "what I should like would be to find a girl who was quite pure, make her fall in love with me, and take her virginity." M. de Charlus could not refrain from pinching Morel's ear affectionately, but added innocently: "What good would that be to you? If you took her maidenhead, you would be obliged to marry her." "Marry her?" cried Morel, guessing that the Baron was fuddled, or else giving no thought to the man, more scrupulous in reality than he supposed, to whom he was speaking. "Marry her? Balls! I should promise, but once the little operation was performed, I should clear out and leave her." M. de Charlus was in the habit, when a fiction was capable of causing him a momentary sensual pleasure, of believing in its truth, while keeping himself free to withdraw his credulity altogether a minute later, when his pleasure was at an end. "You would really do that?" he said to Morel with a laugh, squeezing him more tightly still. "And why not?" said Morel, seeing that he was not shocking the Baron by continuing to expound to him what was indeed one of his desires. "It is dangerous," said M. de Charlus. "I should have my kit packed and ready, and buzz off and leave no address." "And what about me?" asked M. de Charlus. "I should take you with me, of course," Morel made haste to add, never having thought of what would become of the Baron who was the least of his responsibilities. "I say, there's a kid I should love to try that game on, she's a little seamstress who keeps a shop in M. le Duc's *hôtel*." "Jupien's girl," the Baron exclaimed, as the wine-waiter entered the room. "Oh! Never," he added, whether because the presence of a third person had cooled his ardour, or because even in

this sort of black mass in which he took a delight in defiling the most sacred things, he could not bring himself to allow the mention of people to whom he was bound by ties of friendship. "Jupien is a good man, the child is charming, it would be a shame to make them unhappy." Morel felt that he had gone too far and was silent, but his gaze continued to fix itself in imagination upon the girl for whose benefit he had once begged me to address him as "dear great master" and from whom he had ordered a waistcoat. An industrious worker, the child had not taken any holiday, but I learned afterwards that while the violinist was in the neighbourhood of Balbec she never ceased to think of his handsome face, ennobled by the accident that having seen Morel in my company she had taken him for a "gentleman."

"I never heard Chopin play," said the Baron, "and yet I might have done so, I took lessons from Stamati, but he forbade me to go and hear the Master of the Nocturnes at my aunt Chimay's." "That was damned silly of him," exclaimed Morel. "On the contrary," M. de Charlus retorted warmly, in a shrill voice. "He shewed his intelligence. He had realised that I had a 'nature' and that I would succumb to Chopin's influence. It made no difference, because when I was quite young I gave up music, and everything else, for that matter. Besides one can more or less imagine him," he added in a slow, nasal, drawling tone, "there are still people who did hear him, who can give you an idea. However, Chopin was only an excuse to come back to the mediumistic aspect which you are neglecting."

The reader will observe that, after an interpolation of common parlance, M. de Charlus had suddenly become

as precious and haughty in his speech as ever. The idea of Morel's "dropping" without compunction a girl whom he had outraged had given him a sudden and entire pleasure. From that moment his sensual appetites were satisfied for a time and the sadist (a true medium, he, if you like) who had for a few moments taken the place of M. de Charlus had fled, leaving a clear field for the real M. de Charlus, full of artistic refinement, sensibility, goodness. "You were playing the other day the transposition for the piano of the Fifteenth Quartet, which is absurd in itself because nothing could be less pianistic. It is meant for people whose ears are hurt by the too highly strained chords of the glorious Deaf One. Whereas it is precisely that almost bitter mysticism that is divine. In any case you played it very badly and altered all the *tempo*. You ought to play it as though you were composing it: the young Morel, afflicted with a momentary deafness and with a non-existent genius stands for an instant motionless. Then, seized by the divine frenzy, he plays, he composes the opening bars. After which, exhausted by this initial effort, he gives way, letting droop his charming forelock to please Mme. Verdurin, and, what is more, gives himself time to recreate the prodigious quantity of grey matter which he has commandeered for the Pythian objectivation. Then, having regained his strength, seized by a fresh and overmastering inspiration, he flings himself upon the sublime, imperishable phrase which the virtuoso of Berlin" (we suppose M. de Charlus to have meant by this expression Mendelssohn) "was to imitate without ceasing. It is in this, the only really transcendent and animating fashion, that I shall make you play in Paris." When M. de Charlus gave him ad-

vice of this sort, Morel was far more alarmed than when he saw the head waiter remove his scorned roses and "cup," for he asked himself with anxiety what effect it would create among his "class." But he was unable to dwell upon these reflexions, for M. de Charlus said to him imperiously: "Ask the head waiter if he has a Bon Chrétien." "A good christian, I don't understand." "Can't you see we've reached the dessert, it's a pear. You may be sure, Mme. de Cambremer has them in her garden, for the Comtesse d'Escarbagnas whose double she is had them. M. Thibaudier sends her them, saying: 'Here is a Bon Chrétien which is worth tasting.'" "No, I didn't know." "I can see that you know nothing. If you have never even read Molière. . . . Oh, well, since you are no more capable of ordering food than of anything else, ask simply for a pear which is grown in this neighbourhood, the Louise-Bonne d'Avranches." "The?" "Wait a minute, since you are so stupid, I shall ask him myself for others, which I prefer. Waiter, have you any Doyennée des Comices? Charlie, you must read the exquisite passage about that pear by the Duchesse Emilie de Clermont-Tonnerre." "No, Sir, there aren't any." Have you Triomphe de Jodoigne?" "No, Sir." "Any Virginie-Dallet? Or Passe-Colmar? No? Very well, since you've nothing, we may as well go. The Duchesse d'Angoulême is not in season yet, come along, Charlie." Unfortunately for M. de Charlus, his want of common sense, perhaps too the chastity of what were probably his relations with Morel, made him go out of his way at this period to shower upon the violinist strange bounties which the other was incapable of understanding, and to which his nature, impulsive in its own way, but

mean and ungrateful, could respond only by a harshness or a violence that were steadily intensified and plunged M. de Charlus—formerly so proud, now quite timid—in fits of genuine despair. We shall see how, in the smallest matters, Morel, who fancied himself a M. de Charlus a thousand times more important, completely misunderstood, by taking it literally, the Baron's arrogant information with regard to the aristocracy. Let us for the moment say simply this, while Albertine waits for me at Saint-Jean de la Haise, that if there was one thing which Morel set above nobility (and this was in itself distinctly noble, especially in a person whose pleasure was to pursue little girls—on the sly—with the chauffeur), it was his artistic reputation and what the others might think of him in the violin class. No doubt it was an ugly trait in his character that because he felt M. de Charlus to be entirely devoted to him he appeared to disown him, to make fun of him, in the same way as, when I had promised not to reveal the secret of his father's position with my great-uncle, he treated me with contempt. But on the other hand his name, as that of a recognised artist, Morel, appeared to him superior to a "name." And when M. de Charlus, in his dreams of Platonic affection, tried to make him adopt one of his family titles, Morel stoutly refused.

When Albertine thought it better to remain at Saint-Jean de la Haise and paint, I would take the car, and it was not merely to Gourville and Féterne, but to Saint-Mars le Vêtu and as far as Criquetot that I was able to penetrate before returning to fetch her. While pretending to be occupied with anything rather than herself, and to be obliged to forsake her for other pleasures, I thought

only of her. As often as not I went no farther than the great plain which overlooks Gourville, and as it resembles slightly the plain that begins above Combray, in the direction of Méséglise, even at a considerable distance from Albertine, I had the joy of thinking that if my gaze could not reach her, still, travelling farther than my vision, that strong and gentle sea breeze which was sweeping past me must be flowing down, without anything to arrest it as far as Quetteholme, until it stirred the branches of the trees that bury Saint-Jean de la Haise in their foliage, caressing the face of my mistress, and must thus be extending a double tie between her and myself in this retreat indefinitely enlarged, but without danger, as in those games in which two children find themselves momentarily out of sight and earshot of one another, and yet, while far apart, remain together. I returned by those roads from which there is a view of the sea, and on which in the past, before it appeared among the branches, I used to shut my eyes to reflect that what I was going to see was indeed the plaintive ancestress of the earth, pursuing as in the days when no living creature yet existed its lunatic, immemorial agitation. Now, these roads were no longer simply the means of rejoining Albertine; when I recognised each of them in their uniformity, knowing how far they would run in a straight line, where they would turn, I remembered that I had followed them while I thought of Mlle. de Stermaria, and also that this same eagerness to find Albertine I had felt in Paris as I walked the streets along which Mme. de Guermantes might pass; they assumed for me the profound monotony, the moral significance of a sort of ruled line that my character must follow. It was natural, and yet it was not

without importance; they reminded me that it was my fate to pursue only phantoms, creatures whose reality existed to a great extent in my imagination; there are people indeed—and this had been my case from my childhood—for whom all the things that have a fixed value, assessable by others, fortune, success, high positions, do not count; what they must have, is phantoms. They sacrifice all the rest, leave no stone unturned, make everything else subservient to the capture of some phantom. But this soon fades away; then they run after another, prepared to return later on to the first. It was not the first time that I had gone in quest of Albertine, the girl I had seen that first year outlined against the sea. Other women, it is true, had been interposed between the Albertine whom I had first loved and her from whom I was scarcely separated at this moment; other women, notably the Duchesse de Guermantes. But, the reader will say, why give yourself so much anxiety with regard to Gilberte, take so much trouble over Madame de Guermantes, if, when you have become the friend of the latter, it is with the sole result of thinking no more of her, but only of Albertine? Swann, before his own death, might have answered the question, he who had been a lover of phantoms. Of phantoms pursued, forgotten, sought afresh sometimes for a single meeting and in order to establish contact with an unreal life which at once escaped, these Balbec roads were full. When I thought that their trees, pear trees, apple trees, tamarisks, would outlive me, I seemed to receive from them the warning to set myself to work at last, before the hour should strike of rest everlasting.

I left the carriage at Quetteholme, ran down the sunken

path, crossed the brook by a plank and found Albertine painting in front of the church all spires and crockets, thorny and red, blossoming like a rose bush. The lantern alone shewed an unbroken front; and the smiling surface of the stone was abloom with angels who continued, before the twentieth century couple that we were, to celebrate, taper in hand, the ceremonies of the thirteenth. It was they that Albertine was endeavouring to portray on her prepared canvas, and, imitating Elstir, she was laying on the paint in sweeping strokes, trying to obey the noble rhythm set, the great master had told her, by those angels so different from any that he knew. Then she collected her things. Leaning upon one another we walked back up the sunken path, leaving the little church, as quiet as though it had never seen us, to listen to the perpetual sound of the brook. Presently the car started, taking us home by a different way. We passed Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse. Over its church, half new, half restored, the setting sun spread its patina as fine as that of centuries. Through it the great bas-reliefs seemed to be visible only through a floating layer, half liquid, half luminous; the Blessed Virgin, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Joachim swam in the impalpable tide, almost on dry land, on the water's or the sunlight's surface. Rising in a warm dust, the many modern statues reached, on their pillars, halfway up the golden webs of sunset. In front of the church a tall cypress seemed to be in a sort of consecrated enclosure. We left the car for a moment to look at it and strolled for a little. No less than of her limbs, Albertine was directly conscious of her toque of Leghorn straw and of the silken veil (which were for her the source of no less satisfaction), and derived from them, as we

strolled round the church, a different sort of impetus, revealed by a contentment which was inert but in which I found a certain charm; veil and toque which were but a recent, adventitious part of my friend, but a part that was already dear to me, as I followed its trail with my eyes, past the cypress in the evening air. She herself could not see it, but guessed that the effect was pleasing, for she smiled at me, harmonising the poise of her head with the headgear that completed it: "I don't like it, it's restored," she said to me, pointing to the church and remembering what Elstir had said to her about the priceless, inimitable beauty of old stone. Albertine could tell a restoration at a glance. One could not help feeling surprised at the sureness of the taste she had already acquired in architecture, as contrasted with the deplorable taste she still retained in music. I cared no more than Elstir for this church, it was with no pleasure to myself that its sunlit front had come and posed before my eyes, and I had got out of the car to examine it only out of politeness to Albertine. I found, however, that the great impressionist had contradicted himself; why exalt this fetish of its objective architectural value, and not take into account the transfiguration of the church by the sunset? "No, certainly not," said Albertine, "I don't like it; I like its name *orgueilleuse*. But what I must remember to ask Brichot is why Saint-Mars is called *le Vêtu*. We shall be going there next, shan't we?" she said, gazing at me out of her black eyes over which her toque was pulled down, like her little polo cap long ago. Her veil floated behind her. I got back into the car with her, happy in the thought that we should be going next day to Saint-Mars, where, in this blazing weather when one could

think only of the delights of a bath, the two ancient steeples, salmon-pink, with their lozenge-shaped tiles, gaping slightly as though for air, looked like a pair of old, sharp-snouted fish, coated in scales, moss-grown and red, which without seeming to move were rising in a blue, transparent water. On leaving Marcouville, to shorten the road, we turned aside at a crossroads where there is a farm. Sometimes Albertine made the car stop there and asked me to go alone to fetch, so that she might drink it in the car, a bottle of Calvados or cider, which the people assured me was not effervescent, and which proceeded to drench us from head to foot. We sat pressed close together. The people of the farm could scarcely see Albertine in the closed car, I handed them back their bottles; we moved on again, as though to continue that private life by ourselves, that lovers' existence which they might suppose us to lead, and of which this halt for refreshment had been only an insignificant moment; a supposition that would have appeared even less far-fetched if they had seen us after Albertine had drunk her bottle of cider; she seemed then positively unable to endure the existence of an interval between herself and me which as a rule did not trouble her; beneath her linen skirt her legs were pressed against mine, she brought close against my cheeks her own cheeks which had turned pale, warm and red over the cheekbones, with something ardent and faded about them such as one sees in girls from the slums. At such moments, almost as quickly as her personality, her voice changed also, she forsook her own voice to adopt another, raucous, bold, almost dissolute. Night began to fall. What a pleasure to feel her leaning against me, with her toque and her veil, reminding me that it is

always thus, seated side by side, that we find couples who are in love. I was perhaps in love with Albertine, but as I did not venture to let her see my love, although it existed in me, it could only be like an abstract truth, of no value until one has succeeded in checking it by experiment; as it was, it seemed to me unrealisable and outside the plane of life. As for my jealousy, it urged me to leave Albertine as little as possible, although I knew that it would not be completely cured until I had parted from her for ever. I could even feel it in her presence, but would then take care that the circumstances should not be repeated which had aroused it. Once, for example, on a fine morning, we went to luncheon at Rivebelle. The great glazed doors of the dining-room and of that hall in the form of a corridor in which tea was served stood open revealing the sunlit lawns beyond, of which the huge restaurant seemed to form a part. The waiter with the flushed face and black hair that writhed like flames was flying from end to end of that vast expanse less rapidly than in the past, for he was no longer an assistant but was now in charge of a row of tables; nevertheless, owing to his natural activity, sometimes far off, in the dining-room, at other times nearer, but out of doors, serving visitors who had preferred to feed in the garden, one caught sight of him, now here, now there, like successive statues of a young god running, some in the interior, which for that matter was well lighted, of a mansion bounded by a vista of green grass, others beneath the trees, in the bright radiance of an open air life. For a moment he was close to ourselves. Albertine replied absent-mindedly to what I had just said to her. She was gazing at him with rounded eyes. For a minute or

two I felt that one may be close to the person whom one loves and yet not have her with one. They had the appearance of being engaged in a mysterious conversation, rendered mute by my presence, and the sequel possibly of meetings in the past of which I knew nothing, or merely of a glance that he had given her—at which I was the *terzo incomodo*, from whom the others try to hide things. Even when, forcibly recalled by his employer, he had withdrawn from us, Albertine while continuing her meal seemed to be regarding the restaurant and its gardens merely as a lighted running-track, on which there appeared here and there amid the varied scenery the swift-foot god with the black tresses. At one moment I asked myself whether she was not going to rise up and follow him, leaving me alone at my table. But in the days that followed I began to forget for ever this painful impression, for I had decided never to return to Rivebelle, I had extracted a promise from Albertine, who assured me that she had never been there before and would never return there. And I denied that the nimble-footed waiter had had eyes only for her, so that she should not believe that my company had deprived her of a pleasure. It happened now and again that I would revisit Rivebelle, but alone, and drink too much, as I had done there in the past. As I drained a final glass I gazed at a round pattern painted on the white wall, concentrated upon it the pleasure that I felt. It alone in the world had any existence for me; I pursued it, touched it and lost it by turns with my wavering glance, and felt indifferent to the future, contenting myself with my painted pattern like a butterfly circling about a poised butterfly with which it is going to end its life in an act of supreme consummation.

The moment was perhaps particularly well chosen for giving up a woman whom no very recent or very keen suffering obliged me to ask for this balm for a malady which they possess who have caused it. I was calmed by these very drives, which, even if I did not think of them at the moment save as a foretaste of a morrow which itself, notwithstanding the longing with which it filled me, was not to be different from to-day, had the charm of having been torn from the places which Albertine had frequented hitherto and where I had not been with her, her aunt's house, those of her girl friends. The charm not of a positive joy, but only of the calming of an anxiety, and quite strong nevertheless. For at an interval of a few days, when my thoughts turned to the farm outside which we had sat drinking cider, or simply to the stroll we had taken round Saint-Mars le Vêtu, remembering that Albertine had been walking by my side in her toque, the sense of her presence added of a sudden so strong a virtue to the trivial image of the modern church that at the moment when the sunlit front came thus of its own accord to pose before me in memory, it was like a great soothing compress laid upon my heart. I dropped Albertine at Parville, but only to join her again in the evening and lie stretched out by her side, in the darkness, upon the beach. No doubt I did not see her every day, still I could say to myself: "If she were to give an account of how she spent her time, of her life, it would still be myself that played the largest part in it;" and we spent together long hours on end which brought into my days so sweet an intoxication that even when, at Parville, she jumped from the car which I was to send to fetch her an hour later, I no more felt myself to be alone

in it than if before leaving me she had strewn it with flowers. I might have dispensed with seeing her every day; I was going to be happy when I left her, and I knew that the calming effect of that happiness might be prolonged over many days. But at that moment I heard Albertine as she left me say to her aunt or to a girl friend: "Then to-morrow at eight-thirty. We mustn't be late, the others will be ready at a quarter past." The conversation of a woman one loves is like the soil that covers a subterranean and dangerous water; one feels at every moment beneath the words the presence, the penetrating chill of an invisible pool; one perceives here and there its treacherous percolation, but the water itself remains hidden. The moment I heard these words of Albertine, my calm was destroyed. I wanted to ask her to let me see her the following morning, so as to prevent her from going to this mysterious rendezvous at half-past eight which had been mentioned in my presence only in covert terms. She would no doubt have begun by obeying me, while regretting that she had to give up her plans; in time she would have discovered my permanent need to upset them; I should have become the person from whom one hides everything. Besides, it is probable that these gatherings from which I was excluded amounted to very little, and that it was perhaps from the fear that I might find one of the other girls there vulgar or boring that I was not invited to them. Unfortunately this life so closely involved with Albertine's had a reaction not only upon myself; to me it brought calm; to my mother it caused an anxiety, her confession of which destroyed my calm. As I entered the hotel happy in my own mind, determined to terminate, one day soon, an existence the

end of which I imagined to depend upon my own volition, my mother said to me, hearing me send a message to the chauffeur to go and fetch Albertine: "How you do waste your money." (Françoise in her simple and expressive language said with greater force: "That's the way the money goes.") "Try," Mamma went on, "not to become like Charles de Sévigné, of whom his mother said: 'His hand is a crucible in which gold melts.' Besides, I do really think you have gone about quite enough with Albertine. I assure you, you're overdoing it, even to her it may seem ridiculous. I was delighted to think that you found her a distraction, I am not asking you never to see her again, but simply that it may not be impossible to meet one of you without the other." My life with Albertine, a life devoid of keen pleasures—that is to say of keen pleasures that I could feel—that life which I intended to change at any moment, choosing a calm interval, became once again suddenly and for a time necessary to me when, by these words of Mamma's, it found itself threatened. I told my mother that what she had just said would delay for perhaps two months the decision for which she asked, which otherwise I would have reached before the end of that week. Mamma began to laugh (so as not to depress me) at this instantaneous effect of her advice, and promised not to speak of the matter to me again so as not to prevent the rebirth of my good intentions. But, since my grandmother's death, whenever Mamma allowed herself to laugh, the incipient laugh would be cut short and would end in an almost heartbroken expression of sorrow, whether from remorse at having been able for an instant to forget, or else from the recrudescence which this brief moment of oblivion

had given to her cruel obsession. But to the thoughts aroused in her by the memory of my grandmother, which was rooted in my mother's mind, I felt that on this occasion there were added others, relative to myself, to what my mother dreaded as the sequel of my intimacy with Albertine; an intimacy to which she dared not, however, put a stop, in view of what I had just told her. But she did not appear convinced that I was not mistaken. She remembered all the years in which my grandmother and she had refrained from speaking to me of my work, and of a more wholesome rule of life which, I said, the agitation into which their exhortations threw me alone prevented me from beginning, and which, notwithstanding their obedient silence, I had failed to pursue. After dinner the car brought Albertine back; there was still a glimmer of daylight; the air was not so warm, but after a scorching day we both dreamed of strange and delicious coolness; then to our fevered eyes the narrow slip of moon appeared at first (as on the evening when I had gone to the Princesse de Guermantes's and Albertine had telephoned to me) like the slight, fine rind, then like the cool section of a fruit which an invisible knife was beginning to peel in the sky. Sometimes too, it was I that went in search of my mistress, a little later in that case; she would be waiting for me before the arcade of the market at Maineville. At first I could not make her out; I would begin to fear that she might not be coming, that she had misunderstood me. Then I saw her in her white blouse with blue spots spring into the car by my side with the light bound of a young animal rather than a girl. And it was like a dog too that she began to caress me interminably. When night had fallen and, as the

manager of the hotel remarked to me, the sky was all "studied" with stars, if we did not go for a drive in the forest with a bottle of champagne, then, without heeding the strangers who were still strolling upon the faintly lighted front, but who could not have seen anything a yard away on the dark sand, we would lie down in the shelter of the dunes; that same body in whose suppleness abode all the feminine, marine and sportive grace of the girls whom I had seen for the first time pass before a horizon of waves, I held pressed against my own, beneath the same rug, by the edge of the motionless sea divided by a tremulous path of light; and we listened to the sea without tiring and with the same pleasure, both when it held its breath, suspended for so long that one thought the reflux would never come, and when at last it gasped out at our feet the long awaited murmur. Finally I took Albertine back to Parville. When we reached her house, we were obliged to break off our kisses for fear lest some one should see us; not wishing to go to bed she returned with me to Balbec, from where I took her back for the last time to Parville; the chauffeurs of those early days of the motor-car were people who went to bed at all hours. And as a matter of fact I returned to Balbec only with the first dews of morning, alone this time, but still surrounded with the presence of my mistress, gorged with an inexhaustible provision of kisses. On my table I would find a telegram or a postcard. Albertine again! She had written them at Quetteholme when I had gone off by myself in the car, to tell me that she was thinking of me. I got into bed as I read them over. Then I caught sight, over the curtains, of the bright streak of daylight and said to myself that we must be in love with

one another after all, since we had spent the night in one another's arms. When next morning I caught sight of Albertine on the front, I was so afraid of her telling me that she was not free that day, and could not accede to my request that we should go out together, that I delayed as long as possible making the request. I was all the more uneasy since she wore a cold, preoccupied air; people were passing whom she knew; doubtless she had made plans for the afternoon from which I was excluded. I looked at her, I looked at that charming body, that blushing head of Albertine, rearing in front of me the enigma of her intentions, the unknown decision which was to create the happiness or misery of my afternoon. It was a whole state of the soul, a whole future existence that had assumed before my eyes the allegorical and fatal form of a girl. And when at last I made up my mind, when with the most indifferent air that I could muster, I asked: "Are we to go out together now, and again this evening?" and she replied: "With the greatest pleasure," then the sudden replacement, in the rosy face, of my long uneasiness by a delicious sense of ease made even more precious to me those outlines to which I was perpetually indebted for the comfort, the relief that we feel after a storm has broken. I repeated to myself: "How sweet she is, what an adorable creature!" in an excitement less fertile than that caused by intoxication, scarcely more profound than that of friendship, but far superior to the excitement of social life. We cancelled our order for the car only on the days when there was a dinner-party at the Verdurins' and on those when, Albertine not being free to go out with me, I took the opportunity to inform anybody who wished to see me that I should be

remaining at Balbec. I gave Saint-Loup permission to come on these days, but on these days only. For on one occasion when he had arrived unexpectedly, I had preferred to forego the pleasure of seeing Albertine rather than run the risk of his meeting her, than endanger the state of happy calm in which I had been dwelling for some time and see my jealousy revive. And I had been at my ease only after Saint-Loup had gone. And so he pledged himself, with regret, but with scrupulous observance, never to come to Balbec unless summoned there by myself. In the past, when I thought with longing of the hours that Mme. de Guermantes passed in his company, how I valued the privilege of seeing him! Other people never cease to change places in relation to ourselves. In the imperceptible but eternal march of the world, we regard them as motionless in a moment of vision, too short for us to perceive the motion that is sweeping them on. But we have only to select in our memory two pictures taken of them at different moments, close enough together however for them not to have altered in themselves —perceptibly, that is to say—and the difference between the two pictures is a measure of the displacement that they have undergone in relation to us. He alarmed me dreadfully by talking to me of the Verdurins, I was afraid that he might ask me to take him there, which would have been quite enough, what with the jealousy that I should be feeling all the time, to spoil all the pleasure that I found in going there with Albertine. But fortunately Robert assured me that, on the contrary, the one thing he desired above all others was not to know them. "No," he said to me, "I find that sort of clerical atmosphere maddening." I did not at first understand the

application of the adjective "clerical" to the Verdurins, but the end of Saint-Loup's speech threw a light on his meaning, his concessions to those fashions in words which one is often astonished to see adopted by intelligent men. "I mean the houses," he said, "where people form a tribe, a religious order, a chapel. You aren't going to tell me that they're not a little sect; they're all butter and honey to the people who belong, no words bad enough for those who don't. The question is not, as for Hamlet, to be or not to be, but to belong or not to belong. You belong, my uncle Charlus belongs. I can't help it, I never have gone in for that sort of thing, it isn't my fault."

I need hardly say that the rule which I had imposed upon Saint-Loup, never to come and see me unless I had expressly invited him, I promulgated no less strictly for all and sundry of the persons with whom I had gradually begun to associate at la Raspelière, Féterne, Montsurvent, and elsewhere; and when I saw from the hotel the smoke of the three o'clock train which in the anfractuosity of the cliffs of Parville left its stable plume which long remained hanging from the flank of the green slopes, I had no hesitation as to the identity of the visitor who was coming to tea with me and was still, like a classical deity, concealed from me by that little cloud. I am obliged to confess that this visitor, authorised by me beforehand to come, was hardly ever Saniette, and I have often reproached myself for this omission. But Saniette's own consciousness of his being a bore (far more so, naturally, when he came to pay a call than when he told a story) had the effect that, albeit he was more learned, more intelligent and a better man all round than most people, it seemed impossible to feel in his company, I do not say any pleas-

ure, but anything save an almost intolerable irritation which spoiled one's whole afternoon. Probably if Saniette had frankly admitted this boredom which he was afraid of causing, one would not have dreaded his visits. Boredom is one of the least of the evils that we have to endure, his boringness existed perhaps only in the imagination of other people, or had been inoculated into him by them by some process of suggestion which had taken root in his charming modesty. But he was so anxious not to let it be seen that he was not sought after, that he dared not offer himself. Certainly he was right in not behaving like the people who are so glad to be able to raise their hats in a public place, that when, not having seen you for years, they catch sight of you in a box with smart people whom they do not know, they give you a furtive but resounding good-evening, seeking an excuse in the pleasure, the emotion that they felt on seeing you, on learning that you are going about again, that you are looking well, etc. Saniette, on the contrary, was lacking in courage. He might, at Mme. Verdurin's or in the little tram, have told me that it would give him great pleasure to come and see me at Balbec, were he not afraid of disturbing me. Such a suggestion would not have alarmed me. On the contrary, he offered nothing, but with a tortured expression on his face and a stare as indestructible as a fired enamel, into the composition of which, however, there entered, with a passionate desire to see one—provided he did not find some one else who was more entertaining—the determination not to let this desire be manifest, said to me with a detached air: "You don't happen to know what you will be doing in the next few days, because I shall probably be somewhere in the

neighbourhood of Balbec? Not that it makes the slightest difference, I just thought I would ask you." This air deceived nobody, and the inverse signs whereby we express our sentiments by their opposites are so clearly legible that we ask ourselves how there can still be people who say, for instance: "I have so many invitations that I don't know where to lay my head" to conceal the fact that they have been invited nowhere. But what was more, this detached air, probably on account of the heterogeneous elements that had gone to form it, gave you, what you would never have felt in the fear of boredom or in a frank admission of the desire to see you, that is to say that sort of distaste, of repulsion, which in the category of relations of simple social courtesy corresponds to—in that of love—the disguised offer made to a lady by the lover whom she does not love to see her on the following day, he protesting the while that it does not really matter, or indeed not that offer but an attitude of false coldness. There emanated at once from Saniette's person something or other which made you answer him in the tenderest of tones: "No, unfortunately, this week, I must explain to you. . . ." And I allowed to call upon me instead people who were a long way his inferiors but had not his gaze charged with melancholy or his mouth wrinkled with all the bitterness of all the calls which he longed, while saying nothing about them, to pay upon this person and that. Unfortunately it was very rarely that Saniette did not meet in the "crawler" the guest who was coming to see me, if indeed the latter had not said to me at the Verdurins': "Don't forget, I'm coming to see you on Thursday," the very day on which I had just told Saniette that I should not be at home. So that

he came in the end to imagine life as filled with entertainments arranged behind his back, if not actually at his expense. On the other hand, as none of us is ever a single person, this too discreet of men was morbidly indiscreet. On the one occasion on which he happened to come and see me uninvited, a letter, I forget from whom, had been left lying on my table. After the first few minutes, I saw that he was paying only the vaguest attention to what I was saying. The letter, of whose subject he knew absolutely nothing, fascinated him and at every moment I expected his glittering eyeballs to detach themselves from their sockets and fly to the letter which, of no importance in itself, his curiosity had made magnetic. You would have called him a bird about to dash into the jaws of a serpent. Finally he could restrain himself no longer, he began by altering its position, as though he were trying to tidy my room. This not sufficing him, he took it up, turned it over, turned it back again, as though mechanically. Another form of his indiscretion was that once he had fastened himself to you he could not tear himself away. As I was feeling unwell that day, I asked him to go back by the next train, in half-an-hour's time. He did not doubt that I was feeling unwell, but replied: "I shall stay for an hour and a quarter, and then I shall go." Since then I have regretted that I did not tell him, whenever I had an opportunity, to come and see me. Who knows? Possibly I might have charmed away his ill fortune, other people would have invited him for whom he would immediately have deserted myself, so that my invitations would have had the twofold advantage of giving him pleasure and ridding me of his company.

On the days following those on which I had been "at

home," I naturally did not expect any visitors and the motor-car would come to fetch us, Albertine and myself. And, when we returned, Aimé, on the lowest step of the hotel, could not help looking, with passionate, curious, greedy eyes, to see what tip I was giving the chauffeur. It was no use my enclosing my coin or note in my clenched fist, Aimé's gaze tore my fingers apart. He turned his head away a moment later, for he was discreet, well bred, and indeed was himself content with relatively small wages. But the money that another person received aroused in him an irrepressible curiosity and made his mouth water. During these brief moments, he wore the attentive, feverish air of a boy reading one of Jules Verne's tales, or of a diner seated at a neighbouring table in a restaurant who, seeing the waiter carving for you a pheasant which he himself either could not afford or would not order, abandons for an instant his serious thoughts to fasten upon the bird a gaze which love and longing cause to smile.

And so, day after day, these excursions in the motor-car followed one another. But once, as I was being taken up to my room, the lift-boy said to me: "That gentleman has been, he gave me a message for you." The lift-boy uttered these words in an almost inaudible voice, coughing and expectorating in my face. "I haven't half caught cold!" he went on, as though I were incapable of perceiving this for myself. "The doctor says it's whooping-cough," and he began once more to cough and expectorate over me. "Don't tire yourself by trying to speak," I said to him with an air of kindly interest, which was feigned. I was afraid of catching the whooping-cough which, with my tendency to choking fits, would have

been a serious matter to me. But he made a point of honour, like a virtuoso who refuses to let himself be taken to hospital, of talking and expectorating all the time. "No, it doesn't matter," he said ("Perhaps not to you," I thought, "but to me it does"). "Besides, I shall be returning soon to Paris" ("Excellent, provided he doesn't give it to me first"). "It seems," he went on, "that Paris is quite superb. It must be even more superb than here or Monte-Carlo, although pages, in fact visitors, and even head waiters who have been to Monte-Carlo for the season have often told me that Paris was not so superb as Monte-Carlo. They were cheated, perhaps, and yet, to be a head waiter, you've got to have your wits about you; to take all the orders, reserve tables, you need a head! I've heard it said that it's even more terrible than writing plays and books." We had almost reached my landing when the lift-boy carried me down again to the ground floor because he found that the button was not working properly, and in a moment had put it right. I told him that I preferred to walk upstairs, by which I meant, without putting it in so many words, that I preferred not to catch whooping-cough. But with a cordial and contagious burst of coughing the boy thrust me back into the lift. "There's no danger now, I've fixed the button." Seeing that he was not ceasing to talk, preferring to learn the name of my visitor and the message that he had left, rather than the comparative beauties of Balbec, Paris and Monte-Carlo, I said to him (as one might say to a tenor who is wearying one with Benjamin Godard, "Won't you sing me some Debussy?") "But who is the person that called to see me?" "It's the gentleman you went out with yesterday. I am going to fetch his card,

it's with my porter." As, the day before, I had dropped Robert de Saint-Loup at Doncières station before going to meet Albertine, I supposed that the lift-boy was referring to him, but it was the chauffeur. And by describing him in the words: "The gentleman you went out with," he taught me at the same time that a working man is just as much a gentleman as a man about town. A lesson in the use of words only. For in point of fact I had never made any distinction between the classes. And if I had felt, on hearing a chauffeur called a gentleman, the same astonishment as Comte X who had only held that rank for a week and whom, by saying: "the Comtesse looks tired," I made turn his head round to see who it was that I meant, it was simply because I was not familiar with that use of the word; I had never made any difference between working men, professional men and noblemen, and I should have been equally ready to make any of them my friends. With a certain preference for the working men, and after them for the noblemen, not because I liked them better, but because I knew that one could expect greater courtesy from them towards the working men than one finds among professional men, whether because the great nobleman does not despise the working man as the professional man does or else because they are naturally polite to anybody, as beautiful women are glad to bestow a smile which they know to be so joyfully received. I cannot however pretend that this habit that I had of putting people of humble station on a level with people in society, even if it was quite understood by the latter, was always entirely satisfactory to my mother. Not that, humanly speaking, she made any difference between one person and another, and if Fran-

çoise was ever in sorrow or in pain she was comforted and tended by Mamma with the same devotion as her best friend. But my mother was too much my grandmother's daughter not to accept, in social matters, the rule of caste. People at Combray might have kind hearts, sensitive natures, might have adopted the most perfect theories of human equality, my mother, when a footman became emancipated, began to say "you" and slipped out of the habit of addressing me in the third person, was moved by these presumptions to the same wrath that breaks out in Saint-Simon's *Memoirs,* whenever a nobleman who is not entitled to it seizes a pretext for assuming the style of "Highness" in an official document, or for not paying dukes the deference he owes to them and is gradually beginning to lay aside. There was a "Combray spirit" so refractory that it will require centuries of good nature (my mother's was boundless), of theories of equality, to succeed in dissolving it. I cannot swear that in my mother certain particles of this spirit had not remained insoluble. She would have been as reluctant to give her hand to a footman as she would have been ready to give him ten francs (which for that matter he was far more glad to receive). To her, whether she admitted it or not, masters were masters, and servants were the people who fed in the kitchen. When she saw the driver of a motor-car dining with me in the restaurant, she was not altogether pleased, and said to me: "It seems to me you might have a more suitable friend than a mechanic," as she might have said, had it been a question of my marriage: "You might find somebody better than that." This particular chauffeur (fortunately I never dreamed of inviting him to dinner) had come to tell me that the

motor-car company which had sent him to Balbec for the season had ordered him to return to Paris on the following day. This excuse, especially as the chauffeur was charming and expressed himself so simply that one would always have taken anything he said for Gospel, seemed to us to be most probably true. It was only half so. There was as a matter of fact no more work for him at Balbec. And in any case, the Company being only half convinced of the veracity of the young Evangelist, bowed over the consecration cross of his steering-wheel, was anxious that he should return as soon as possible to Paris. And indeed if the young Apostle wrought a miracle in multiplying his mileage when he was calculating it for M. de Charlus, when on the other hand it was a matter of rendering his account to the Company, he divided what he had earned by six. In consequence of which the Company, coming to the conclusion either that nobody wanted a car now at Balbec, which, so late in the season, was quite probable, or that it was being robbed, decided that, upon either hypothesis, the best thing was to recall him to Paris, not that there was very much work for him there. What the chauffeur wished was to avoid, if possible, the dead season. I have said—though I was unaware of this at the time, when the knowledge of it would have saved me much annoyance—that he was on intimate terms (without their ever shewing any sign of acquaintance before other people) with Morel. Starting from the day on which he was ordered back, before he realised that there was still a way out of going, we were obliged to content ourselves for our excursions with hiring a carriage, or sometimes, as an amusement for Albertine and because she was fond of riding, a pair of saddle-

horses. The carriages were unsatisfactory. "What a rattle-trap," Albertine would say. I would often, as it happened, have preferred to be driving by myself. Without being ready to fix a date, I longed to put an end to this existence which I blamed for making me renounce not so much work as pleasure. It would happen also, however, that the habits which bound me were suddenly abolished, generally when some former self, full of the desire to live a merry life, took the place of what was my self at the moment. I felt this longing to escape especially strong one day when, having left Albertine at her aunt's, I had gone on horseback to call on the Verdurins and had taken an unfrequented path through the woods the beauty of which they had extolled to me. Clinging to the outline of the cliffs, it alternately climbed and then, hemmed in by dense woods on either side, dived into savage gorges. For a moment the barren rocks by which I was surrounded, the sea visible in their jagged intervals, swam before my eyes, like fragments of another universe: I had recognised the mountainous and marine landscape which Elstir had made the scene of those two admirable water colours: "Poet meeting a Muse," "Young Man meeting a Centaur" which I had seen at the Duchesse de Guermantes's. The thought of them transported the place in which I was so far beyond the world of to-day that I should not have been surprised if, like the young man of the prehistoric age that Elstir painted, I had in the course of my ride come upon a mythological personage. Suddenly, my horse gave a start; he had heard a strange sound; it was all I could do to hold him and remain in the saddle, then I raised in the direction from which the sound seemed to come my eyes filled with tears

and saw, not two hundred feet above my head, against the sun, between two great wings of flashing metal which were carrying him on, a creature whose barely visible face appeared to me to resemble that of a man. I was as deeply moved as a Greek upon seeing for the first time a demi-god. I cried also, for I was ready to cry the moment I realised that the sound came from above my head—aeroplanes were still rare in those days—at the thought that what I was going to see for the first time was an aeroplane. Then, just as when in a newspaper one feels that one is coming to a moving passage, the mere sight of the machine was enough to make me burst into tears. Meanwhile the airman seemed to be uncertain of his course; I felt that there lay open before him—before me, had not habit made me a prisoner—all the routes in space, in life itself; he flew on, let himself glide for a few moments, over the sea, then quickly making up his mind, seeming to yield to some attraction the reverse of gravity, as though returning to his native element, with a slight movement of his golden wings, rose sheer into the sky.

To come back to the mechanic, he demanded of Morel that the Verdurins should not merely replace their break by a motor-car (which, granted their generosity towards the faithful, was comparatively easy), but, what was less easy, replace their head coachman, the sensitive young man who was inclined to dark thoughts, by himself, the chauffeur. This change was carried out in a few days by the following device. Morel had begun by seeing that the coachman was robbed of everything that he needed for the carriage. One day it was the bit that was missing, another day the curb. At other times it was the cushion

of his box-seat that had vanished, or his whip, his rug, his hammer, sponge, chamois-leather. But he always managed to borrow what he required from a neighbour; only he was late in bringing round the carriage, which put him in M. Verdurin's bad books and plunged him in a state of melancholy and dark thoughts. The chauffeur, who was in a hurry to take his place, told Morel that he would have to return to Paris. It was time to do something desperate. Morel persuaded M. Verdurin's servants that the young coachman had declared that he would set a trap for the lot of them, boasting that he could take on all six of them at once, and assured them that they could not overlook such an insult. He himself could not take any part in the quarrel, but he warned them so that they might be on their guard. It was arranged that while M. and Mme. Verdurin and their guests were out walking the servants should fall upon the young man in the coach house. I may mention, although it was only the pretext for what was bound to happen, but because the people concerned interested me later on, that the Verdurins had a friend staying with them that day whom they had promised to take for a walk before his departure, which was fixed for that same evening.

What surprised me greatly when we started off for our walk was that Morel, who was coming with us, and was to play his violin under the trees, said to me: "Listen, I have a sore arm, I don't want to say anything about it to Mme. Verdurin, but you might ask her to send for one of her footmen, Howsler for instance, he can carry my things." "I think you ought to suggest some one else," I replied. "He will be wanted here for dinner." A

look of anger passed over Morel's face. "No, I'm not going to trust my violin to any Tom, Dick or Harry." I realised later on his reason for this selection. Howsler was the beloved brother of the young coachman, and, if he had been left at home, might have gone to his rescue. During our walk, dropping his voice so that the elder Howsler should not overhear: "What a good fellow he is," said Morel. "So is his brother, for that matter. If he hadn't that fatal habit of drinking. . . ." "Did you say drinking?" said Mme. Verdurin, turning pale at the idea of having a coachman who drank. "You've never noticed it. I always say to myself it's a miracle that he's never had an accident while he's been driving you." "Does he drive anyone else, then?" "You can easily see how many spills he's had, his face to-day is a mass of bruises. I don't know how he's escaped being killed, he's broken his shafts." "I haven't seen him to-day," said Mme. Verdurin, trembling at the thought of what might have happened to her, "you appal me." She tried to cut short the walk so as to return at once, but Morel chose an aria by Bach with endless variations to keep her away from the house. As soon as we got back she went to the stable, saw the new shaft and Howsler streaming with blood. She was on the point of telling him, without making any comment on what she had seen, that she did not require a coachman any longer, and of paying him his wages, but of his own accord, not wishing to accuse his fellow-servants, to whose animosity he attributed retrospectively the theft of all his saddlery, and seeing that further patience would only end in his being left for dead on the ground, he asked leave to go at once, which made everything quite simple. The chauf-

feur began his duties next day and, later on, Mme. Verdurin (who had been obliged to engage another) was so well satisfied with him that she recommended him to me warmly, as a man on whom I might rely. I, knowing nothing of all this, used to engage him by the day in Paris, but I am anticipating events, I shall come to all this when I reach the story of Albertine. At the present moment we are at la Raspelière, where I have just been dining for the first time with my mistress, and M. de Charlus with Morel, the reputed son of an "Agent" who drew a fixed salary of thirty thousand francs annually, kept his carriage, and had any number of majordomos, subordinates, gardeners, bailiffs and farmers at his beck and call. But, since I have so far anticipated, I do not wish to leave the reader under the impression that Morel was entirely wicked. He was, rather, a mass of contradictions, capable on certain days of being genuinely kind.

I was naturally greatly surprised to hear that the coachman had been dismissed, and even more surprised when I recognised his successor as the chauffeur who had been taking Albertine and myself in his car. But he poured out a complicated story, according to which he had thought that he was summoned back to Paris, where an order had come for him to go to the Verdurins, and I did not doubt his word for an instant. The coachman's dismissal was the cause of Morel's talking to me for a few minutes, to express his regret at the departure of that worthy fellow. However, even apart from the moments when I was alone, and he literally bounded towards me beaming with joy, Morel, seeing that everybody made much of me at la Raspelière and feeling that he was deliberately cutting himself off from the society

of a person who could in no way imperil him, since he had made me burn my boats and had destroyed all possibility of my treating him with an air of patronage (which I had never, for that matter, dreamed of adopting), ceased to hold aloof from me. I attributed his change of attitude to the influence of M. de Charlus, which as a matter of fact did make him in certain respects less limited, more of an artist, but in others, when he interpreted literally the eloquent, insincere, and moreover transient formulas of his master, made him stupider than ever. That M. de Charlus might have said something to him was as a matter of fact the only thing that occurred to me. How was I to have guessed then what I was told afterwards (and have never been certain of its truth, Andrée's assertions as to everything that concerned Albertine, especially later on, having always seemed to me to be statements to be received with caution, for, as we have already seen, she was not genuinely fond of my mistress and was jealous of her), a thing which in any event, even if it was true, was remarkably well concealed from me by both of them: that Albertine was on the best of terms with Morel? The novel attitude which, about the time of the coachman's dismissal, Morel adopted with regard to myself, enabled me to change my opinion of him. I retained the ugly impression of his character which had been suggested by the servility which this young man had shewn me when he needed my services, followed, as soon as the service had been rendered, by a scornful aloofness as though he did not even see me. I still lacked evidence of his venal relations with M. de Charlus, and also of his bestial and purposeless instincts, the non-gratification of which (when it occurred) or the complications that they in-

volved, were the cause of his sorrows; but his character was not so uniformly vile and was full of contradictions. He resembled an old book of the middle ages, full of mistakes, of absurd traditions, of obscenities; he was extraordinarily composite. I had supposed at first that his art, in which he was really a past-master, had given him superiorities that went beyond the virtuosity of the mere performer. Once when I spoke of my wish to start work "Work, become famous," he said to me. "Who said that?" I inquired. "Fontanes, to Chateaubriand." He also knew certain love letters of Napoleon. Good, I thought to myself, he reads. But this phrase which he had read I know not where was doubtless the only one that he knew in the whole of ancient or modern literature, for he repeated it to me every evening. Another which he quoted even more frequently to prevent me from breathing a word about him to anybody, was the following, which he considered equally literary, whereas it is barely grammatical, or at any rate makes no kind of sense, except perhaps to a mystery-loving servant: "Beware of the wary." As a matter of fact, if one cast back from this stupid maxim to what Fontanes had said to Chateaubriand, one explored a whole side, varied but less contradictory than one might suppose, of Morel's character. This youth who, provided there was money to be made by it, would have done anything in the world, and without remorse—perhaps not without an odd sort of vexation, amounting to nervous excitement, to which however the name remorse could not for a moment be applied—who would, had it been to his advantage, have plunged in distress, not to say mourning, whole families, this youth who set money above everything, above, not

to speak of unselfish kindness, the most natural sentiments of common humanity, this same youth nevertheless set above money his certificate as first prize-winner at the Conservatoire and the risk of there being anything said to his discredit in the flute or counterpoint class. And so his most violent rages, his most sombre and unjustifiable fits of ill-temper arose from what he himself (generalising doubtless from certain particular cases in which he had met with spiteful people) called universal treachery. He flattered himself that he escaped from this fault by never speaking about anyone, by concealing his tactics, by distrusting everybody. (Alas for me, in view of what was to happen after my return to Paris, his distrust had not "held" in the case of the Balbec chauffeur, in whom he had doubtless recognised a peer, that is to say, in contradiction of his maxim, a wary person in the good sense of the word, a wary person who remains obstinately silent before honest folk and at once comes to an understanding with a blackguard.) It seemed to him—and he was not absolutely wrong—that his distrust would enable him always to save his bacon, to slip unscathed out of the most perilous adventures, without anyone's being able not indeed to prove but even to suggest anything against him, in the institution in the Rue Bergère. He would work, become famous, would perhaps be one day, with his respectability still intact, examiner in the violin on the Board of that great and glorious Conservatoire.

But it is perhaps crediting Morel's brain with too much logic to attempt to discriminate between these contradictions. As a matter of fact his nature was just like a sheet of paper that has been folded so often in every direction that it is impossible to straighten it out.

He seemed to act upon quite lofty principles, and in a magnificent hand, marred by the most elementary mistakes in spelling, spent hours writing to his brother that he had behaved badly to his sisters, that he was their elder, their natural support, etc., and to his sisters that they had shewn a want of respect for himself.

Presently, as summer came to an end, when one got out of the train at Douville, the sun dimmed by the prevailing mist had ceased to be anything more in a sky that was uniformly mauve than a lump of redness. To the great peace which descends at nightfall over these tufted saltmarshes, and had tempted a number of Parisians, painters mostly, to spend their holidays at Douville, was added a moisture which made them seek shelter early in their little bungalows. In several of these the lamp was already lighted. Only a few cows remained out of doors gazing at the sea and lowing, while others, more interested in humanity, turned their attention towards our carriages. A single painter who had set up his easel where the ground rose slightly was striving to render that great calm, that hushed luminosity. Perhaps the cattle were going to serve him unconsciously and kindly as models, for their contemplative air and their solitary presence when the human beings had withdrawn, contributed in their own way to enhance the strong impression of repose that evening conveys. And, a few weeks later, the transposition was no less agreeable when, as autumn advanced, the days became really short, and we were obliged to make our journey in the dark. If I had been out anywhere in the afternoon, I had to go back to change my clothes, at the latest, by five o'clock, when at this season the round, red sun had already sunk half way down the slanting sheet

of glass, which formerly I had detested, and, like a Greek fire, was inflaming the sea in the glass fronts of all my book-cases. Some wizard's gesture having revived, as I put on my dinner-jacket, the alert and frivolous self that was mine when I used to go with Saint-Loup to dine at Rivebelle and on the evening when I looked forward to taking Mme. de Stermaria to dine on the island in the Bois, I began unconsciously to hum the same tune that I had hummed then; and it was only when I realised this that by the song I recognised the resurrected singer, who indeed knew no other tune. The first time that I sang it, I was beginning to be in love with Albertine, but I imagined that I would never get to know her. Later on, in Paris, it was when I had ceased to be in love with her and some days after I had enjoyed her for the first time. Now it was when I was in love with her again and on the point of going out to dinner with her, to the great regret of the manager who supposed that I would end by staying at la Raspelière altogether and deserting his hotel, and assured me that he had heard that fever was prevalent in that neighbourhood, due to the marshes of the Bac and their " stagning " water. I was delighted by the multiplicity in which I saw my life thus spread over three planes; and besides, when one becomes for an instant one's former self, that is to say different from what one has been for some time past, one's sensibility, being no longer dulled by habit, receives the slightest shocks of those vivid impressions which make everything that has preceded them fade into insignificance, and to which, because of their intensity, we attach ourselves with the momentary enthusiasm of a drunken man. It was already night when we got into the omnibus or carriage

which was to take us to the station where we would find the little train. And in the hall the chief magistrate was saying to us: "Ah! You are going to la Raspelière! Sapristi, she has a nerve, your Mme. Verdurin, to make you travel an hour by train in the dark, simply to dine with her. And then to start off again at ten o'clock at night, with a wind blowing like the very devil. It is easy to see that you have nothing else to do," he added, rubbing his hands together. No doubt he spoke thus from annoyance at not having been invited, and also from the satisfaction that people feel who are "busy"—though it be with the most idiotic occupation—at "not having time" to do what you are doing.

Certainly it is only right that the man who draws up reports, adds up figures, answers business letters, follows the movements of the stock exchange, should feel when he says to you with a sneer: "It's all very well for you; you have nothing better to do," an agreeable sense of his own superiority. But this would be no less contemptuous, would be even more so (for dining out is a thing that the busy man does also) were your recreation writing *Hamlet* or merely reading it. Wherein busy men shew a want of reflexion. For the disinterested culture which seems to them a comic pastime of idle people at the moment when they find them engaged in it is, they ought to remember, the same that in their own profession brings to the fore men who may not be better magistrates or administrators than themselves but before whose rapid advancement they bow their heads, saying: "It appears he's a great reader, a most distinguished individual." But above all the chief magistrate did not take into account that what pleased me about these dinners at la

Raspelière was that, as he himself said quite rightly, though as a criticism, they "meant a regular journey," a journey whose charm appeared to me all the more thrilling in that it was not an object in itself, and no one made any attempt to find pleasure in it—that being reserved for the party for which we were bound, and greatly modified by all the atmosphere that surrounded it. It was already night now when I exchanged the warmth of the hotel—the hotel that had become my home—for the railway carriage into which I climbed with Albertine, in which a glimmer of lamplight on the window shewed, at certain halts of the panting little train, that we had arrived at a station. So that there should be no risk of Cottard's missing us, and not having heard the name of the station, I opened the door, but what burst headlong into the carriage was not any of the faithful, but the wind, the rain, the cold. In the darkness I could make out fields, I could hear the sea, we were in the open country. Albertine, before we were engulfed in the little nucleus, examined herself in a little mirror, extracted from a gold bag which she carried about with her. The fact was that on our first visit, Mme. Verdurin having taken her upstairs to her dressing-room so that she might make herself tidy before dinner, I had felt, amid the profound calm in which I had been living for some time, a slight stir of uneasiness and jealousy at being obliged to part from Albertine at the foot of the stair, and had become so anxious while I was by myself in the drawing-room, among the little clan, and asking myself what my mistress could be doing, that I had sent a telegram the next day, after finding out from M. de Charlus what the correct thing was at the moment, to

order from Cartier's a bag which was the joy of Albertine's life and also of mine. It was for me a guarantee of peace of mind, and also of my mistress's solicitude. For she had evidently seen that I did not like her to be parted from me at Mme. Verdurin's and arranged to make in the train all the toilet that was necessary before dinner.

Included in the number of Mme. Verdurin's regular frequenters, and reckoned the most faithful of them all, had been, for some months now, M. de Charlus. Regularly, thrice weekly, the passengers who were sitting in the waiting-rooms or standing upon the platform at Doncières-Ouest used to see that stout gentleman go past with his grey hair, his black moustaches, his lips reddened with a salve less noticeable at the end of the season than in summer when the daylight made it more crude and the heat used to melt it. As he made his way towards the little train, he could not refrain (simply from force of habit, as a connoisseur, since he now had a sentiment which kept him chaste, or at least, for most of the time, faithful) from casting at the labourers, soldiers, young men in tennis flannels, a furtive glance at once inquisitorial and timorous, after which he immediately let his eyelids droop over his half-shut eyes with the unction of an ecclesiastic engaged in telling his beads, with the modesty of a bride vowed to the one love of her life or of a well brought up girl. The faithful were all the more convinced that he had not seen them, since he got into a different compartment from theirs (as, often enough, did Princess Sherbatoff also), like a man who does not know whether people will be pleased or not to be seen with him and leaves them the option of coming and joining him if

they choose. This option had not been taken, at first, by the Doctor, who had advised us to leave him by himself in his compartment. Making a virtue of his natural hesitation now that he occupied a great position in the medical world, it was with a smile, throwing back his head, looking at Ski over his glasses, that he said, either from malice or in the hope of eliciting the opinion of the "comrades": "You can understand that if I was by myself, a bachelor, but for my wife's sake I ask myself whether I ought to allow him to travel with us after what you have told me," the Doctor whispered. "What's that you're saying?" asked Mme. Cottard. "Nothing, it doesn't concern you, it's not meant for ladies to hear," the Doctor replied with a wink, and with a majestic self-satisfaction which held the balance between the dryly malicious air he adopted before his pupils and patients and the uneasiness that used in the past to accompany his shafts of wit at the Verdurins', and went on talking in a lowered tone. Mme. Cottard could make out only the words "one of the brotherhood" and "*tapette*," and as in the Doctor's vocabulary the former expression denoted the Jewish race and the latter a wagging tongue, Mme. Cottard concluded that M. de Charlus must be a garrulous Israelite. She could not understand why people should keep aloof from the Baron for that reason, felt it her duty as the senior lady of the clan to insist that he should not be left alone, and so we proceeded in a body to M. de Charlus's compartment, led by Cottard who was still perplexed. From the corner in which he was reading a volume of Balzac, M. de Charlus observed this hesitation; and yet he had not raised his eyes. But just as deaf-mutes detect, from a movement of the air imperceptible to other people, that

some one is standing behind them, so he had, to warn him of other people's coldness towards him, a positive hyperaesthesia. This had, as it habitually does in every sphere, developed in M. de Charlus imaginary sufferings. Like those neuropaths who, feeling a slight lowering of the temperature, induce from this that there must be a window open on the floor above, become violently excited and start sneezing, M. de Charlus, if a person appeared preoccupied in his presence, concluded that somebody had repeated to that person a remark that he had made about him. But there was no need even for the other person to have a distracted, or a sombre, or a smiling air, he would invent them. On the other hand, cordiality completely concealed from him the slanders of which he had not heard. Having begun by detecting Cottard's hesitation, if, greatly to the surprise of the faithful who did not suppose that their presence had yet been observed by the reader's lowered gaze, he held out his hand to them when they were at a convenient distance, he contented himself with a forward inclination of his whole person which he quickly drew back for Cottard, without taking in his own gloved hand the hand which the Doctor had held out to him. "We felt we simply must come and keep you company, Sir, and not leave you alone like that in your little corner. It is a great pleasure to us," Mme. Cottard began in a friendly tone to the Baron. "I am greatly honoured," the Baron intoned, bowing coldly. "I was so pleased to hear that you have definitely chosen this neighbourhood to set up your taber. . . ." She was going to say "tabernacle" but it occurred to her that the word was Hebraic and discourteous to a Jew who might see an allusion in it. And so she paused for a moment to

choose another of the expressions that were familiar to her, that is to say a consecrated expression: "to set up, I should say, your *penates*." (It is true that these deities do not appertain to the Christian religion either, but to one which has been dead for so long that it no longer claims any devotees whose feelings one need be afraid of hurting.) "We, unfortunately, what with term beginning, and the Doctor's hospital duties, can never choose our domicile for very long in one place." And glancing at a cardboard box: "You see too how we poor women are less fortunate than the sterner sex, to go only such a short distance as to our friends the Verdurins', we are obliged to take a whole heap of impedimenta." I meanwhile was examining the Baron's volume of Balzac. It was not a paper-covered copy, picked up on a bookstall, like the volume of Bergotte which he had lent me at our first meeting. It was a book from his own library, and as such bore the device: "I belong to the Baron de Charlus," for which was substituted at times, to shew the studious tastes of the Guermantes: "In proeliis non semper," or yet another motto: "Non sine labore." But we shall see these presently replaced by others, in an attempt to please Morel. Mme. Cottard, a little later, hit upon a subject which she felt to be of more personal interest to the Baron. "I don't know whether you agree with me, Sir," she said to him presently, "but I hold very broad views, and, to my mind, there is a great deal of good in all religions. I am not one of the people who get hydrophobia at the sight of a . . . Protestant." "I was taught that mine is the true religion," replied M. de Charlus. "He's a fanatic," thought Mme. Cottard, "Swann, until recently, was more tolerant; it is true that

he was a converted one." Now, so far from this being the case, the Baron was not only a Christian, as we know, but pious with a mediaeval fervour. To him as to the sculptors of the middle ages, the Christian church was, in the living sense of the word, peopled with a swarm of beings, whom he believed to be entirely real, Prophets, Apostles, Angels, holy personages of every sort, surrounding the Incarnate Word, His Mother and Her Spouse, the Eternal Father, all the Martyrs and Doctors of the Church, as they may be seen carved in high relief, thronging the porches or lining the naves of the cathedrals. Out of all these M. de Charlus had chosen as his patrons and intercessors the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, to whom he made frequent appeals that they would convey his prayers to the Eternal Father, about Whose Throne they stand. And so Mme. Cottard's mistake amused me greatly.

To leave the religious sphere, let us mention that the Doctor, who had come to Paris meagrely equipped with the counsels of a peasant mother, and had then been absorbed in the almost purely materialistic studies to which those who seek to advance in a medical career are obliged to devote themselves for a great many years, had never become cultured, had acquired increasing authority but never any experience, took the word "honoured" in its literal meaning and was at once flattered by it because he was vain and distressed because he had a kind heart. "That poor de Charlus," he said to his wife that evening, "made me feel sorry for him when he said he was honoured by travelling with us. One feels, poor devil, that he knows nobody, that he has to humble himself."

But presently, without any need to be guided by the

charitable Mme. Cottard, the faithful had succeeded in overcoming the qualms which they had all more or less felt at first, on finding themselves in the company of M. de Charlus. No doubt in his presence they were incessantly reminded of Ski's revelations, and conscious of the sexual abnormality embodied in their travelling companion. But this abnormality itself had a sort of attraction for them. It gave for them to the Baron's conversation, remarkable in itself but in ways which they could scarcely appreciate, a savour which made the most interesting conversation, that of Brichot himself, appear slightly insipid in comparison. From the very outset, moreover, they had been pleased to admit that he was intelligent. "The genius that is perhaps akin to madness," the Doctor declaimed, and albeit the Princess, athirst for knowledge, insisted, said not another word, this axiom being all that he knew about genius and seeming to him less supported by proof than our knowledge of typhoid fever and arthritis. And as he had become proud and remained ill-bred: "No questions, Princess, do not interrogate me, I am at the seaside for a rest. Besides, you would not understand, you know nothing about medicine." And the Princess held her peace with apologies, deciding that Cottard was a charming man and realising that celebrities were not always approachable. In this initial period, then, they had ended by finding M. de Charlus an agreeable person notwithstanding his vice (or what is generally so named). Now it was, quite unconsciously, because of that vice that they found him more intelligent than the rest. The most simple maxims to which, adroitly provoked by the sculptor or the don, M. de Charlus gave utterance concerning love, jealousy,

beauty, in view of the experience, strange, secret, refined and monstrous, upon which he founded them, assumed for the faithful that charm of unfamiliarity with which a psychology analogous to that which our own dramatic literature has always offered us bedecks itself in a Russian or Japanese play performed by native actors. One might still venture, when he was not listening, upon a malicious witticism at his expense. "Oh!" whispered the sculptor, seeing a young railwayman with the sweeping eyelashes of a dancing girl at whom M. de Charlus could not help staring, "if the Baron begins making eyes at the conductor, we shall never get there, the train will start going backwards. Just look at the way he's staring at him, this is not a steam-tram we're on, it's a funicular." But when all was said, if M. de Charlus did not appear, it was almost a disappointment to be travelling only with people who were just like everybody else, and not to have by one's side this painted, paunchy, tightly-buttoned personage, reminding one of a box of exotic and dubious origin from which escapes the curious odour of fruits the mere thought of tasting which stirs the heart. From this point of view, the faithful of the masculine sex enjoyed a keener satisfaction in the short stage of the journey between Saint-Martin du Chêne, where M. de Charlus got in, and Doncières, the station at which Morel joined the party. For so long as the violinist was not there (and provided the ladies and Albertine, keeping to themselves so as not to disturb our conversation, were out of hearing), M. de Charlus made no attempt to appear to be avoiding certain subjects and did not hesitate to speak of "what it is customary to call degenerate morals." Albertine could not hamper him, for she was

always with the ladies, like a well-bred girl who does not wish her presence to restrict the freedom of grown-up conversation. And I was quite resigned to not having her by my side, on condition however that she remained in the same carriage. For I, who no longer felt any jealousy and scarcely any love for her, never thought of what she might be doing on the days when I did not see her; on the other hand, when I was there, a mere partition which might at a pinch be concealing a betrayal was intolerable to me, and if she retired with the ladies to the next compartment, a moment later, unable to remain in my seat any longer, at the risk of offending whoever might be talking, Brichot, Cottard or Charlus, to whom I could not explain the reason for my flight, I would rise, leave them without ceremony, and, to make certain that nothing abnormal was going on, walk down the corridor. And, till we came to Doncières, M. de Charlus, without any fear of shocking his audience, would speak sometimes in the plainest terms of morals which, he declared, for his own part he did not consider either good or evil. He did this from cunning, to shew his breadth of mind, convinced as he was that his own morals aroused no suspicion in the minds of the faithful. He was well aware that there did exist in the world several persons who were, to use an expression which became habitual with him later on, "in the know" about himself. But he imagined that these persons were not more than three or four, and that none of them was at that moment upon the coast of Normandy. This illusion may appear surprising in so shrewd, so suspicious a man. Even in the case of those whom he believed to be more or less well informed, he flattered himself that their information was all quite

vague, and hoped, by telling them this or that fact about anyone, to clear the person in question from all suspicion on the part of a listener who out of politeness pretended to accept his statements. Indeed, being uncertain as to what I might know or guess about him, he supposed that my opinion, which he imagined to be of far longer standing than it actually was, was quite general, and that it was sufficient for him to deny this or that detail to be believed, whereas on the contrary, if our knowledge of the whole always precedes our knowledge of details, it makes our investigation of the latter infinitely easier and having destroyed his cloak of invisibility no longer allows the pretender to conceal what he wishes to keep secret. Certainly when M. de Charlus, invited to a dinner-party by one of the faithful or of their friends, took the most complicated precautions to introduce among the names of ten people whom he mentioned that of Morel, he never imagined that for the reasons, always different, which he gave for the pleasure or convenience which he would find that evening in being invited to meet him, his hosts, while appearing to believe him implicitly, substituted a single reason, always the same, of which he supposed them to be ignorant, namely that he was in love with him. Similarly, Mme. Verdurin, seeming always entirely to admit the motives, half artistic, half charitable, with which M. de Charlus accounted to her for the interest that he took in Morel, never ceased to thank the Baron with emotion for his kindness—his touching kindness, she called it—to the violinist. And how astonished M. de Charlus would have been, if, one day when Morel and he were delayed and had not come by the train, he had heard the Mistress say: "We're all here now except the young ladies." The

Baron would have been all the more stupefied in that, going hardly anywhere save to la Raspelière, he played the part there of a family chaplain, like the abbé in a stock company, and would sometimes (when Morel had 48 hours' leave) sleep there for two nights in succession. Mme. Verdurin would then give them communicating rooms and, to put them at their ease, would say: "If you want to have a little music, don't worry about us, the walls are as thick as a fortress, you have nobody else on your floor, and my husband sleeps like lead." On such days M. de Charlus would relieve the Princess of the duty of going to meet strangers at the station, apologise for Mme. Verdurin's absence on the grounds of a state of health which he described so vividly that the guests entered the drawing-room with solemn faces, and uttered cries of astonishment on finding the Mistress up and doing and wearing what was almost a low dress.

For M. de Charlus had for the moment become for Mme. Verdurin the faithfullest of the faithful, a second Princess Sherbatoff. Of his position in society she was not nearly so certain as of that of the Princess, imagining that if the latter cared to see no one outside the little nucleus it was out of contempt for other people and preference for it. As this pretence was precisely the Verdurin's own, they treating as bores everyone to whose society they were not admitted, it is incredible that the Mistress can have believed the Princess to possess a heart of steel, detesting what was fashionable. But she stuck to her guns, and was convinced that in the case of the great lady also it was in all sincerity and from a love of things intellectual that she avoided the company of bores. The latter were, as it happened, diminishing in numbers

from the Verdurins' point of view. Life by the seaside robbed an introduction of the ulterior consequences which might be feared in Paris. Brilliant men who had come down to Balbec without their wives (which made everything much easier) made overtures to la Raspelière and, from being bores, became too charming. This was the case with the Prince de Guermantes, whom the absence of his Princess would not, however, have decided to go "as a bachelor" to the Verdurins', had not the lodestone of Dreyfusism been so powerful as to carry him in one stride up the steep ascent to la Raspelière, unfortunately upon a day when the Mistress was not at home. Mme. Verdurin as it happened was not certain that he and M. de Charlus moved in the same world. The Baron had indeed said that the Duc de Guermantes was his brother, but this was perhaps the untruthful boast of an adventurer. Man of the world as he had shewn himself to be, so friendly, so "faithful" to the Verdurins, the Mistress still almost hesitated to invite him to meet the Prince de Guermantes. She consulted Ski and Brichot: "The Baron and the Prince de Guermantes, will they be all right together?" "Good gracious, Madame, as to one of the two I think I can safely say." "What good is that to me?" Mme. Verdurin had retorted crossly. "I asked you whether they would mix well together." "Ah! Madame, that is one of the things that it is hard to tell." Mme. Verdurin had been impelled by no malice. She was certain of the Baron's morals, but when she expressed herself in these terms had not been thinking about them for a moment, but had merely wished to know whether she could invite the Prince and M. de Charlus on the same evening, without their clashing. She had no male-

volent intention when she employed these ready-made expressions which are popular in artistic "little clans." To make the most of M. de Guermantes, she proposed to take him in the afternoon, after her luncheon-party, to a charity entertainment at which sailors from the neighbourhood would give a representation of a ship setting sail. But, not having time to attend to everything, she delegated her duties to the faithfullest of the faithful, the Baron. "You understand, I don't want them to hang about like mussels on a rock, they must keep moving, we must see them weighing anchor, or whatever it's called. Now you are always going down to the harbour at Balbec-Plage, you can easily arrange a dress rehearsal without tiring yourself. You must know far more than I do, M. de Charlus, about getting hold of sailors. But after all, we're giving ourselves a great deal of trouble for M. de Guermantes. Perhaps he's only one of those idiots from the Jockey Club. Oh! Heavens, I'm running down the Jockey Club, and I seem to remember that you're one of them. Eh, Baron, you don't answer me, are you one of them? You don't care to come out with us? Look, here is a book that has just come, I think you'll find it interesting. It is by Roujon. The title is attractive: "*Among men.*"

For my part, I was all the more glad that M. de Charlus often took the place of Princess Sherbatoff, inasmuch as I was thoroughly in her bad books, for a reason that was at once trivial and profound. One day when I was in the little train, paying every attention, as was my habit, to Princess Sherbatoff, I saw Mme. de Villeparisis get in. She had as a matter of fact come down to spend some weeks with the Princesse de Luxembourg, but,

chained to the daily necessity of seeing Albertine, I had never replied to the repeated invitations of the Marquise and her royal hostess. I felt remorse at the sight of my grandmother's friend, and, purely from a sense of duty (without deserting Princess Sherbatoff), sat talking to her for some time. I was, as it happened, entirely unaware that Mme. de Villeparisis knew quite well who my companion was but did not wish to speak to her. At the next station, Mme. de Villeparisis left the carriage, indeed I reproached myself with not having helped her on to the platform; I resumed my seat by the side of the Princess. But one would have thought—a cataclysm frequent among people whose position is far from stable and who are afraid that one may have heard something to their discredit, and may be looking down upon them—that the curtain had risen upon a fresh scene. Buried in her *Revue des Deux Mondes,* Madame Sherbatoff barely moved her lips in reply to my questions and finally told me that I was making her head ache. I had not the faintest idea of the nature of my crime. When I bade the Princess good-bye, the customary smile did not light up her face, her chin drooped in a dry acknowledgment, she did not even offer me her hand, nor did she ever speak to me again. But she must have spoken—though what she said I cannot tell—to the Verdurins; for as soon as I asked them whether I ought not to say something polite to Princess Sherbatoff, they replied in chorus: "No! No! No! Nothing of the sort! She does not care for polite speeches!" They did not say this to effect a breach between us, but she had succeeded in making them believe that she was unmoved by civilities, that hers was a spirit unassailed by the vanities of this world.

One needs to have seen the politician who was reckoned the most single-minded, the most uncompromising, the most unapproachable, so long as he was in office, one must have seen him in the hour of his disgrace, humbly soliciting, with a bright, affectionate smile, the haughty greeting of some unimportant journalist, one must have seen Cottard (whom his new patients regarded as a rod of iron) draw himself erect, one must know out of what disappointments in love, what rebuffs to snobbery were built up the apparent pride, the universally acknowledged anti-snobbery of Princess Sherbatoff, in order to grasp that among the human race the rule—which admits of exceptions, naturally—is that the reputedly hard people are weak people whom nobody wants, and that the strong, caring little whether they are wanted or not, have alone that meekness which the common herd mistake for weakness.

However, I ought not to judge Princess Sherbatoff severely. Her case is so common! One day, at the funeral of a Guermantes, a distinguished man who was standing next to me drew my attention to a slim person with handsome features. "Of all the Guermantes," my neighbour informed me, "that is the most astonishing, the most singular. He is the Duke's brother." I replied imprudently that he was mistaken, that the gentleman in question, who was in no way related to the Guermantes, was named Journier-Sarlovèze. The distinguished man turned his back upon me, and has never even bowed to me since.

A great musician, a member of the Institute, occupying a high official position, who was acquainted with Ski, came to Harambouville, where he had a niece staying,

and appeared at one of the Verdurins' Wednesdays. M. de Charlus was especially polite to him (at Morel's request), principally in order that on his return to Paris the Academician might enable him to attend various private concerts, rehearsals and so forth, at which the violinist would be playing. The Academician, who was flattered, and was naturally a charming person, promised, and kept his promise. The Baron was deeply touched by all the consideration which this personage (who, for his own part, was exclusively and passionately a lover of women) shewed him, all the facilities that he procured to enable him to see Morel, in those official quarters which the profane world may not enter, all the opportunities by which the celebrated artist secured that the young virtuoso might shew himself, might make himself known, by naming him in preference to others of equal talent for auditions which were likely to make a special stir. But M. de Charlus never suspected that he ought to be all the more grateful to the maestro in that the latter, doubly deserving, or, if you prefer it, guilty twice over, was completely aware of the relations between the young violinist and his noble patron. He favoured them, certainly without any sympathy for them, being unable to comprehend any other love than that for the woman who had inspired the whole of his music, but from moral indifference, a professional readiness to oblige, social affability, snobbishness. As for his doubts as to the character of those relations, they were so scanty that, at his first dinner at la Raspelière, he had inquired of Ski, speaking of M. de Charlus and Morel, as he might have spoken of a man and his mistress: "Have they been long together?" But, too much the man of the world to let the parties concerned

see what was in his mind, prepared, should any gossip arise among Morel's fellow-students, to rebuke them, and to reassure Morel by saying to him in a fatherly tone: "One hears that sort of thing about everybody nowadays," he did not cease to load the Baron with civilities which the latter thought charming, but quite natural, being incapable of suspecting the eminent maestro of so much vice or of so much virtue. For the things that were said behind M. de Charlus's back, the expressions used about Morel, nobody was ever base enough to repeat to him. And yet this simple situation is enough to shew that even that thing universally decried, which would find no defender anywhere: the breath of scandal, has itself, whether it be aimed at us and so become especially disagreeable to us, or inform us of something about a third person of which we were unaware, a psychological value of its own. It prevents the mind from falling asleep over the fictitious idea that it has of what it supposes things to be when it is actually no more than their outward appearance. It turns this appearance inside out with the magic dexterity of an idealist philosopher and rapidly presents to our gaze an unsuspected corner of the reverse side of the fabric. How could M. de Charlus have imagined the remark made of him by a certain tender relative: "How on earth can you suppose that Memé is in love with me, you forget that I am a woman!" And yet she was genuinely, deeply attached to M. de Charlus. Why then need we be surprised that in the case of the Verdurins, whose affection and goodwill he had no title to expect, the remarks which they made behind his back (and they did not, as we shall see, confine themselves to remarks), were so different from what he

imagined them to be, that is to say from a mere repetition of the remarks that he heard when he was present? The latter alone decorated with affectionate inscriptions the little ideal tent to which M. de Charlus retired at times to dream by himself, when he introduced his imagination for a moment into the idea that the Verdurins held of him. Its atmosphere was so congenial, so cordial, the repose it offered so comforting, that when M. de Charlus, before going to sleep, had withdrawn to it for a momentary relief from his worries, he never emerged from it without a smile. But, for each one of us, a tent of this sort has two sides: as well as the side which we suppose to be the only one, there is the other which is normally invisible to us, the true front, symmetrical with the one that we know, but very different, whose decoration, in which we should recognise nothing of what we expected to see, would horrify us, as being composed of the hateful symbols of an unsuspected hostility. What a shock for M. de Charlus, if he had found his way into one of these enemy tents, by means of some piece of scandal as though by one of those service stairs where obscene drawings are scribbled outside the back doors of flats by unpaid tradesmen or dismissed servants. But, just as we do not possess that sense of direction with which certain birds are endowed, so we lack the sense of our own visibility as we lack that of distances, imagining as quite close to us the interested attention of the people who on the contrary never give us a thought, and not suspecting that we are at the same time the sole preoccupation of others. And so M. de Charlus lived in a state of deception like the fish which thinks that the water in which it is swimming extends beyond the glass wall of its aquarium which

mirrors it, while it does not see close beside it in the shadow the human visitor who is amusing himself by watching its movements, or the all-powerful keeper who, at the unforeseen and fatal moment, postponed for the present in the case of the Baron (for whom the keeper, in Paris, will be Mme. Verdurin), will extract it without compunction from the place in which it was happily living to cast it into another. Moreover, the races of mankind, in so far as they are not merely collections of individuals, may furnish us with examples more vast, but identical in each of their parts, of this profound, obstinate and disconcerting blindness. Up to the present, if it was responsible for M. de Charlus's discoursing to the little clan remarks of a wasted subtlety or of an audacity which made his listeners smile at him in secret, it had not yet caused him, nor was it to cause him at Balbec any serious inconvenience. A trace of albumen, of sugar, of cardiac arythmia, does not prevent life from remaining normal for the man who is not even conscious of it, when only the physician sees in it a prophecy of catastrophes in store. At presence the fondness—whether Platonic or not—that M. de Charlus felt for Morel merely led the Baron to say spontaneously in Morel's absence that he thought him very good looking, supposing that this would be taken in all innocence, and thereby acting like a clever man who when summoned to make a statement before a Court of Law will not be afraid to enter into details which are apparently to his disadvantage but for that very reason are more natural and less vulgar than the conventional protestations of a stage culprit. With the same freedom, always between Saint-Martin du Chêne and Doncières-Ouest—or conversely on the return jour-

ney—M. de Charlus would readily speak of men who had, it appeared, very strange morals, and would even add: "After all, I say strange, I don't know why, for there's nothing so very strange about that," to prove to himself how thoroughly he was at his ease with his audience. And so indeed he was, provided that it was he who retained the initiative, and that he knew his gallery to be mute and smiling, disarmed by credulity or good manners.

When M. de Charlus was not speaking of his admiration for Morel's beauty, as though it had no connexion with an inclination—called a vice—he would refer to that vice, but as though he himself were in no way addicted to it. Sometimes indeed he did not hesitate to call it by its name. As after examining the fine binding of his volume of Balzac I asked him which was his favourite novel in the *Comédie Humaine*, he replied, his thoughts irresistibly attracted to the same topic: "Either one thing or the other, a tiny miniature like the *Curé de Tours* and the *Femme abandonnée*, or one of the great frescoes like the series of *Illusions perdues*. What! You've never read *Illusions perdues?* It's wonderful. The scene where Carlos Herrera asks the name of the château he is driving past, and it turns out to be Rastignac, the home of the young man he used to love. And then the abbé falls into a reverie which Swann once called, and very aptly, the *Tristesse d'Olympio* of paederasty. And the death of Lucien! I forget who the man of taste was who, when he was asked what event in his life had most distressed him, replied: 'The death of Lucien de Rubempré in *Splendeurs et Misères.*'" "I know that Balzac is all the rage this year, as pessimism was last," Brichot interrupted. "But, at the risk of distressing the hearts that

are smitten with the Balzacian fever, without laying any claim, damme, to being a policeman of letters, or drawing up a list of offences against the laws of grammar, I must confess that the copious improviser whose alarming lucubrations you appear to me singularly to overrate, has always struck me as being an insufficiently meticulous scribe. I have read these *Illusions perdues* of which you are telling us, Baron, flagellating myself to attain to the fervour of an initiate, and I confess in all simplicity of heart that those serial instalments of bombastic balderdash, written in double Dutch—and in triple Dutch: *Esther heureuse, Où mènent les mauvais chemins, A combien l'amour revient aux vieillards,* have always had the effect on me of the *Mystères de Rocambole,* exalted by an inexplicable preference to the precarious position of a masterpiece." "You say that because you know nothing of life," said the Baron, doubly irritated, for he felt that Brichot would not understand either his aesthetic reasons or the other kind. "I quite realise," replied Brichot, "that, to speak like Master François Rabelais, you mean that I am *moult sorbonagre, sorbonicole et sorboniforme.* And yet, just as much as any of the comrades, I like a book to give an impression of sincerity and real life, I am not one of those clerks. . . ." "The *quart d'heure de Rabelais,*" the Doctor broke in, with an air no longer of uncertainty but of assurance as to his own wit. ". . . who take a vow of literature following the rule of the Abbaye-aux-Bois, yielding obedience to M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, Grand Master of common form, according to the strict rule of the humanists. M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand's mistake. . . ." "With fried potatoes?" put in Dr. Cottard. "He is the patron

saint of the brotherhood," continued Brichot, ignoring the wit of the Doctor, who, on the other hand, alarmed by the don's phrase, glanced anxiously at M. de Charlus. Brichot had seemed wanting in tact to Cottard, whose pun had brought a delicate smile to the lips of Princess Sherbatoff. "With the Professor, the mordant irony of the complete sceptic never forfeits its rights," she said kindly, to shew that the scientist's witticism had not passed unperceived by herself. "The sage is of necessity sceptical," replied the Doctor. "It's not my fault. *Gnothi seauton,* said Socrates. He was quite right, excess in anything is a mistake. But I am dumbfoundered when I think that those words have sufficed to keep Socrates's name alive all this time. What is there in his philosophy, very little when all is said. When one reflects that Charcot and others have done work a thousand times more remarkable, work which moreover is at least founded upon something, upon the suppression of the pupillary reflex as a syndrome of general paralysis, and that they are almost forgotten. After all, Socrates was nothing out of the common. They were people who had nothing better to do, and spent their time strolling about and splitting hairs. Like Jesus Christ: 'Love one another!' it's all very pretty." "My dear," Mme. Cottard implored. "Naturally my wife protests, women are all neurotic." "But, my dear Doctor, I am not neurotic," murmured Mme. Cottard. "What, she is not neurotic! When her son is ill, she exhibits phenomena of insomnia. Still, I quite admit that Socrates, and all the rest of them, are necessary for a superior culture, to acquire the talent of exposition. I always quote his *gnothi seauton* to my pupils at the beginning of the course. Père Bouchard, when

he heard of it, congratulated me." "I am not one of those who hold to form for form's sake, any more than I should treasure in poetry the rhyme millionaire," replied Brichot. "But all the same the *Comédie Humaine*—which is far from human—is more than the antithesis of those works in which the art exceeds the matter, as that worthy hack Ovid says. And it is permissible to choose a middle course, which leads to the presbytery of Meudon or the hermitage of Ferney, equidistant from the Valley of Wolves, in which René superbly performed the duties of a merciless pontificate, and from les Jardies, where Honoré de Balzac, browbeaten by the bailiffs, never ceased voiding upon paper to please a Polish woman, like a zealous apostle of balderdash."

"Chateaubriand is far more alive now than you say, and Balzac is, after all, a great writer," replied M. de Charlus, still too much impregnated with Swann's tastes not to be irritated by Brichot, "and Balzac was acquainted with even those passions which the rest of the world ignores, or studies only to castigate them. Without referring again to the immortal *Illusions perdues; Sarrazine, La Fille aux yeux d'or, Une passion dans le désert,* even the distinctly enigmatic *Fausse Maîtresse* can be adduced in support of my argument. When I spoke of this 'unnatural' aspect of Balzac to Swann, he said to me: 'You are of the same opinion as Taine.' I never had the honour of knowing Monsieur Taine," M. de Charlus continued, with that irritating habit of inserting an otiose "Monsieur" to which people in society are addicted, as though they imagine that by styling a great writer "Monsieur" they are doing him an honour, perhaps keeping him at his proper distance, and making it evident

that they do not know him personally. "I never knew Monsieur Taine, but I felt myself greatly honoured by being of the same opinion as he." However, in spite of these ridiculous social affectations, M. de Charlus was extremely intelligent, and it is probable that if some remote marriage had established a connexion between his family and that of Balzac, he would have felt (no less than Balzac himself, for that matter) a satisfaction which he would have been unable to help displaying as a praiseworthy sign of condescension.

Now and again, at the station after Saint-Martin du Chêne, some young men would get into the train. M. de Charlus could not refrain from looking at them, but as he cut short and concealed the attention that he was paying them, he gave it the air of hiding a secret, more personal even than his real secret; one would have said that he knew them, allowed his acquaintance to appear in spite of himself, after he had accepted the sacrifice, before turning again to us, like children who, in consequence of a quarrel among their respective parents, have been forbidden to speak to certain of their schoolfellows, but who when they meet them cannot forego the temptation to raise their heads before lowering them again before their tutor's menacing cane.

At the word borrowed from the Greek with which M. de Charlus in speaking of Balzac had ended his comparison of the *Tristesse d'Olympio* with the *Splendeurs et Misères,* Ski, Brichot and Cottard had glanced at one another with a smile perhaps less ironical than stamped with that satisfaction which people at a dinner-party would shew who had succeeded in making Dreyfus talk about his own case, or the Empress Eugénie about her

reign. They were hoping to press him a little farther upon this subject, but we were already at Doncières, where Morel joined us. In his presence, M. de Charlus kept a careful guard over his conversation and, when Ski tried to bring it back to the love of Carlos Herrera for Lucien de Rubempré, the Baron assumed the vexed, mysterious, and finally (seeing that nobody was listening to him) severe and judicial air of a father who hears people saying something indecent in front of his daughter. Ski having shewn some determination to pursue the subject, M. de Charlus, his eyes starting out of his head, raised his voice and said, in a significant tone, looking at Albertine, who as a matter of fact could not hear what we were saying, being engaged in conversation with Mme. Cottard and Princess Sherbatoff, and with the suggestion of a double meaning of a person who wishes to teach ill bred people a lesson: "I think it is high time we began to talk of subjects that are likely to interest this young lady." But I quite realised that, to him, the young lady was not Albertine but Morel; he proved, as it happened, later on, the accuracy of my interpretation by the expressions that he employed when he begged that there might be no more of such conversation in front of Morel. "You know," he said to me, speaking of the violinist, "that he is not at all what you might suppose, he is a very respectable youth who has always behaved himself, he is very serious." And one gathered from these words that M. de Charlus regarded sexual inversion as a danger as menacing to young men as prostitution is to women, and that if he employed the epithet "respectable," of Morel it was in the sense that it has when applied to a young shop-girl. Then Brichot, to change the conversation,

asked me whether I intended to remain much longer at Incarville. I had pointed out to him more than once, but in vain, that I was staying not at Incarville but at Balbec, he always repeated the mistake, for it was by the name of Incarville or Balbec-Incarville that he described this section of the coast. There are people like that, who speak of the same things as ourselves but call them by a slightly different name. A certain lady of the Faubourg Saint-Germain used invariably to ask me, when she meant to refer to the Duchesse de Guermantes, whether I had seen Zénaïde lately, or Oriane-Zénaïde, the effect of which was that at first I did not understand her. Probably there had been a time when, some relative of Mme. de Guermantes being named Oriane, she herself, to avoid confusion, had been known as Oriane-Zénaïde. Perhaps, too, there had originally been a station only at Incarville, from which one went in a carriage to Balbec. "Why, what have you been talking about?" said Albertine, astonished at the solemn, paternal tone which M. de Charlus had suddenly adopted. "About Balzac," the Baron hastily replied, "and you are wearing this evening the very same clothes as the Princesse de Cadignan, not her first gown, which she wears at the dinner-party, but the second." This coincidence was due to the fact that, in choosing Albertine's clothes, I sought inspiration in the taste that she had acquired thanks to Elstir, who greatly appreciated a sobriety which might have been called British, had it not been tempered with a gentler, more flowing grace that was purely French. As a rule the garments that he chose offered to the eye a harmonious combination of grey tones like the dress of Diane de Cadignan. M. de Charlus was almost the

only person capable of appreciating Albertine's clothes at their true value; at a glance, his eye detected what constituted their rarity, justified their price; he would never have said the name of one stuff instead of another, and could always tell who had made them. Only he preferred—in women—a little more brightness and colour than Elstir would allow. And so this evening she cast a glance at me half smiling, half troubled, wrinkling her little pink cat's nose. Indeed, meeting over her skirt of grey crêpe de chine, her jacket of grey cheviot gave the impression that Albertine was dressed entirely in grey. But, making a sign to me to help her, because her puffed sleeves needed to be smoothed down or pulled up, for her to get into or out of her jacket, she took it off, and as her sleeves were of a Scottish plaid in soft colours, pink, pale blue, dull green, pigeon's breast, the effect was as though in a grey sky there had suddenly appeared a rainbow. And she asked herself whether this would find favour with M. de Charlus. "Ah!" he exclaimed in delight, "now we have a ray, a prism of colour. I offer you my sincerest compliments." "But it is this gentleman who has earned them," Albertine replied politely, pointing to myself, for she liked to shew what she had received from me. "It is only women who do not know how to dress that are afraid of colours," went on M. de Charlus. "A dress may be brilliant without vulgarity and quiet without being dull. Besides, you have not the same reasons as Mme. de Cadignan for wishing to appear detached from life, for that was the idea which she wished to instil into d'Arthez by her grey gown." Albertine, who was interested in this mute language of clothes, questioned M. de Charlus about the Princesse de Ca-

dignan. "Oh! It is a charming tale," said the Baron in a dreamy tone. "I know the little garden in which Diane de Cadignan used to stroll with M. d'Espard. It belongs to one of my cousins." All this talk about his cousin's garden," Brichot murmured to Cottard, "may, like his pedigree, be of some importance to this worthy Baron. But what interest can it have for us who are not privileged to walk in it, do not know the lady, and possess no titles of nobility?" For Brichot had no suspicion that one might be interested in a gown and in a garden as works of art, and that it was in the pages of Balzac that M. de Charlus saw, in his mind's eye, the garden paths of Mme. de Cadignan. The Baron went on: "But you know her," he said to me, speaking of this cousin, and, by way of flattering me, addressing himself to me as to a person who, exiled amid the little clan, was to M. de Charlus, if not a citizen of his world, at any rate a visitor to it. "Anyhow you must have seen her at Mme. de Villeparisis's." "Is that the Marquise de Villeparisis who owns the château at Baucreux?" asked Brichot with a captivated air. "Yes, do you know her?" inquired M. de Charlus dryly. "No, not at all," replied Brichot, "but our colleague Norpois spends part of his holidays every year at Baucreux. I have had occasion to write to him there." I told Morel, thinking to interest him, that M. de Norpois was a friend of my father. But not a movement of his features shewed that he had heard me, so little did he think of my parents, so far short did they fall in his estimation of what my great-uncle had been, who had employed Morel's father as his valet, and, as a matter of fact, being, unlike the rest of the family, fond of giving trouble, had left a golden memory among

his servants. "It appears that Mme. de Villeparisis is a superior woman; but I have never been allowed to judge of that for myself, nor for that matter has any of my colleagues. For Norpois, who is the soul of courtesy and affability at the Institute, has never introduced any of us to the Marquise. I know of no one who has been received by her except our friend Thureau-Dangin, who had an old family connexion with her, and also Gaston Boissier, whom she was anxious to meet because of an essay which interested her especially. He dined with her once and came back quite enthralled by her charm. Mme. Boissier, however, was not invited." At the sound of these names, Morel melted in a smile. "Ah! Thureau-Dangin," he said to me with an air of interest as great as had been his indifference when he heard me speak of the Marquis de Norpois and my father. "Thureau-Dangin; why, he and your uncle were as thick as thieves. Whenever a lady wanted a front seat for a reception at the Academy, your uncle would say: 'I shall write to Thureau-Dangin.' And of course he got the ticket at once, for you can understand that M. Thureau-Dangin would never have dared to refuse anything to your uncle, who would have been certain to pay him out for it afterwards if he had. I can't help smiling, either, when I hear the name Boissier, for that was where your uncle ordered all the presents he used to give the ladies at the New Year. I know all about it, because I knew the person he used to send for them." He had not only known him, the person was his father. Some of these affectionate allusions by Morel to my uncle's memory were prompted by the fact that we did not intend to remain permanently in the Hôtel Guermantes, where we

had taken an apartment only on account of my grandmother. Now and again there would be talk of a possible move. Now, to understand the advice that Charlie Morel gave me in this connexion, the reader must know that my great-uncle had lived, in his day, at 40*bis* Boulevard Malesherbes. The consequence was that, in the family, as we were in the habit of frequently visiting my uncle Adolphe until the fatal day when I made a breach between my parents and him by telling them the story of the lady in pink, instead of saying "at your uncle's" we used to say "at 40*bis*." Some cousins of my mother used to say to her in the most natural tone: "Ah! Then on Sunday we mustn't expect you. You're dining at 40*bis*." If I were going to call upon some kinswoman, I would be warned to go first of all "to 40*bis*," in order that my uncle might not be offended by my not having begun my round with him. He was the owner of the house and was, I must say, very particular as to the choice of his tenants, all of whom either were or became his personal friends. Colonel the Baron de Vatry used to look in every day and smoke a cigar with him in the hope of making him consent to pay for repairs. The carriage entrance was always kept shut. If my uncle caught sight of a cloth or a rug hanging from one of the window-sills he would dash into the room and have it removed in less time than the police would take to do so nowadays. All the same, he did let part of the house, reserving for himself only two floors and the stables. In spite of this, knowing that he was pleased when people praised the house, we used always to talk of the comfort of the "little mansion" as though my uncle had been its sole occupant, and he allowed us to speak, without uttering the formal contradiction that might have been expected. The "little mansion" was certainly comfortable (my uncle having installed in it

all the most recent inventions). But there was nothing extraordinary about it. Only, my uncle, while saying with a false modesty "my little hovel," was convinced, or in any case had instilled into his valet, the latter's wife, the coachman, the cook, the idea that there was no place in Paris to compare, for comfort, luxury, and general attractiveness, with the little mansion. Charles Morel had grown up in this belief. Nor had he outgrown it. And so, even on days when he was not talking to me, if in the train I mentioned to anyone else the possibility of our moving, at once he would smile at me and, with a wink of connivance, say: "Ah! What you want is something in the style of *40bis!* That's a place that would suit you down to the ground! Your uncle knew what he was about. I am quite sure that in the whole of Paris there's nothing to compare with *40bis.*"

The melancholy air which M. de Charlus had assumed in speaking of the Princesse de Cadignan left me in no doubt that the tale in question had not reminded him only of the little garden of a cousin to whom he was not particularly attached. He became lost in meditation, and, as though he were talking to himself: "The secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan!" he exclaimed, "What a masterpiece! How profound, how heartrending the evil reputation of Diane, who is afraid that the man she loves may hear of it. What an eternal truth, and more universal than might appear, how far it extends!" He uttered these words with a sadness in which nevertheless one felt that he found a certain charm. Certainly M. de Charlus, unaware to what extent precisely his habits were or were not known, had been trembling for some time past at the thought that when he returned to Paris and was seen

there in Morel's company, the latter's family might intervene and so his future happiness be jeopardised. This eventuality had probably not appeared to him hitherto save as something profoundly disagreeable and painful. But the Baron was an artist to his finger-tips. And now that he had begun to identify his own position with that described by Balzac, he took refuge, in a sense, in the tale, and for the calamity which was perhaps in store for him and did not in any case cease to alarm him, he had the consolation of finding in his own anxiety what Swann and also Saint-Loup would have called something "quite Balzacian." This identification of himself with the Princesse de Cadignan had been made easy for M. de Charlus by virtue of the mental transposition which was becoming habitual with him and of which he had already furnished several examples. It was enough in itself, moreover, to make the mere conversion of a woman, as the beloved object, into a young man immediately set in motion about him the whole sequence of social complications which develop round a normal love affair. When, for any reason, we introduce once and for all time a change in the calendar, or in the daily time-table, if we make the year begin a few weeks later, or if we make midnight strike a quarter of an hour earlier, as the days will still consist of twenty-four hours and the months of thirty days, everything that depends upon the measure of time will remain unaltered. Everything may have been changed without causing any disturbance, since the ratio of the figures is still the same. So it is with lives which adopt Central European time, or the Eastern calendar. It seems even that the gratification a man derives from keeping an actress played a part in these relations.

When, after their first meeting, M. de Charlus had made inquiries as to Morel's actual position, he must certainly have learned that he was of humble extraction, but a girl with whom we are in love does not forfeit our esteem because she is the child of poor parents. On the other hand, the well known musicians to whom he had addressed his inquiries, had—and not even from any personal motive, unlike the friends who, when introducing Swann to Odette, had described her to him as more difficult and more sought after than she actually was—simply in the stereotyped manner of men in a prominent position overpraising a beginner, answered the Baron: "Ah! Great talent, has made a name for himself, of course he is still quite young, highly esteemed by the experts, will go far." And, with the mania which leads people who are innocent of inversion to speak of masculine beauty: "Besides, it is charming to watch him play; he looks better than anyone at a concert; he has lovely hair, holds himself so well; his head is exquisite, he reminds one of a violinist in a picture." And so M. de Charlus, raised to a pitch of excitement moreover by Morel himself, who did not fail to let him know how many offers had been addressed to him, was flattered by the prospect of taking him home with him, of making a little nest for him to which he would often return. For during the rest of the time he wished him to enjoy his freedom, which was necessary to his career, which M. de Charlus meant him, however much money he might feel bound to give him, to continue, either because of the thoroughly "Guermantes" idea that a man ought to do something, that he acquires merit only by his talent, and that nobility or money is simply the additional cypher that multiplies a

figure, or because he was afraid lest, having nothing to do and remaining perpetually in his company, the violinist might grow bored. Moreover he did not wish to deprive himself of the pleasure which he found, at certain important concerts, in saying to himself: "The person they are applauding at this moment is coming home with me tonight." Fashionable people, when they are in love and whatever the nature of their love, apply their vanity to anything that may destroy the anterior advantages from which their vanity would have derived satisfaction.

Morel, feeling that I bore him no malice, being sincerely attached to M. de Charlus, and at the same time absolutely indifferent physically to both of us, ended by treating me with the same display of warm friendship as a courtesan who knows that you do not desire her and that her lover has a sincere friend in you who will not attempt to part him from her. Not only did he speak to me exactly as Rachel, Saint-Loup's mistress, had spoken to me long ago, but what was more, to judge by what M. de Charlus reported to me, he used to say to him about me in my absence the same things that Rachel had said about me to Robert. In fact M. de Charlus said to me: "He likes you so much," as Robert had said: "She likes you so much." And just as the nephew on behalf of his mistress, so it was on Morel's behalf that the uncle often invited me to come and dine with them. There were, for that matter, just as many storms between them as there had been between Robert and Rachel. To be sure, after Charlie (Morel) had left us, M. de Charlus would sing his praises without ceasing, repeating—the thought of it was flattering to him—that the violinist was so good to him. But it was evident nevertheless that often

Charlie, even in front of all the faithful, wore an irritated expression, instead of always appearing happy and submissive as the Baron would have wished. This irritation became so violent in course of time, owing to the weakness which led M. de Charlus to forgive Morel his want of politeness, that the violinist made no attempt to conceal, if he did not even deliberately assume it. I have seen M. de Charlus, on entering a railway carriage in which Morel was sitting with some of his soldier friends, greeted with a shrug of the musician's shoulders, accompanied by a wink in the direction of his comrades. Or else he would pretend to be asleep, as though this incursion bored him beyond words. Or he would begin to cough, and the others would laugh, derisively mimicking the affected speech of men like M. de Charlus; and draw Charlie into a corner, from which he would return, as though under compulsion, to sit by M. de Charlus, whose heart was pierced by all these cruelties. It is inconceivable how he can have put up with them; and these ever varied forms of suffering set the problem of happiness in fresh terms for M. de Charlus, compelled him not only to demand more, but to desire something else, the previous combination being vitiated by a horrible memory. And yet, painful as these scenes came to be, it must be admitted that at first the genius of the humble son of France traced for Morel, made him assume charming forms of simplicity, of apparent frankness, even of an independent pride which seemed to be inspired by disinterestedness. This was not the case, but the advantage of this attitude was all the more on Morel's side since, whereas the person who is in love is continually forced to return to the charge, to increase his efforts, it is

on the other hand easy for him who is not in love to proceed along a straight line, inflexible and graceful. It existed by virtue of the privilege of the race in the face —so open—of this Morel whose heart was so tightly shut, that face indued with the neo-Hellenic grace which blooms in the basilicas of Champagne. Notwithstanding his affectation of pride, often when he caught sight of M. de Charlus at a moment when he was not expecting to see him, he would be embarrassed by the presence of the little clan, would blush, lower his eyes, to the delight of the Baron, who saw in this an entire romance. It was simply a sign of irritation and shame. The former sometimes found expression; for, calm and emphatically decent as Morel's attitude generally was, it was not without frequent contradictions. Sometimes, indeed, at something which the Baron said to him, Morel would come out, in the harshest tone, with an insolent retort which shocked everybody. M. de Charlus would lower his head with a sorrowful air, make no reply, and with that faculty which doting fathers possess of believing that the coldness, the rudeness of their children has passed unnoticed, would continue undeterred to sing the violinist's praises. M. de Charlus was not, indeed, always so submissive, but as a rule his attempts at rebellion proved abortive, principally because, having lived among people in society, in calculating the reactions that he might provoke he made allowance for the baser instincts, whether original or acquired. Now, instead of these, he encountered in Morel a plebeian tendency to spells of indifference. Unfortunately for M. de Charlus, he did not understand that, with Morel, everything else must give place when the Conservatoire (and the good reputation of the Conserva-

toire, but with this, which was to be a more serious matter, we are not at present concerned) was in question. Thus, for instance, people of the middle class will readily change their surnames out of vanity, noblemen for personal advantage. To the young violinist, on the contrary, the name Morel was inseparably linked with his first prize for the violin, and so impossible to alter. M. de Charlus would have liked Morel to take everything from himself, including a name. Going upon the facts that Morel's other name was Charles, which resembled Charlus, and that the place where they were in the habit of meeting was called les Charmes, he sought to persuade Morel that, a pleasant name, easy to pronounce, being half the battle for artistic fame, the virtuoso ought without hesitation to take the name Charmel, a discreet allusion to the scene of their intimacy. Morel shrugged his shoulders. As a conclusive argument, M. de Charlus was unfortunately inspired to add that he had a footman of that name. He succeeded only in arousing the furious indignation of the young man. "There was a time when my ancestors were proud of the title of groom, of butler to the King." "There was also a time," replied Morel haughtily, "when my ancestors cut off your ancestors' heads." M. de Charlus would have been greatly surprised had he been told that even if, abandoning the idea of "Charmel," he made up his mind to adopt Morel and to confer upon him one of the titles of the Guermantes family which were at his disposal but which circumstances, as we shall see, did not permit him to offer the violinist, the other would decline, thinking of the artistic reputation attached to the name Morel, and of the things that would be said about him in "the class." So far

above the Faubourg Saint-Germain did he place the Rue Bergère. And so M. de Charlus was obliged to content himself with having symbolical rings made for Morel, bearing the antique device: PLVS VLTRA CAR'LVS. Certainly, in the face of an adversary of a sort with which he was unfamiliar, M. de Charlus ought to have changed his tactics. But which of us is capable of that? Moreover, if M. de Charlus made blunders, Morel was not guiltless of them either. Far more than the actual circumstance which brought about the rupture between them, what was destined, provisionally, at least (but this provisional turned out to be final), to ruin him with M. de Charlus was that his nature included not only the baseness which made him lie down under harsh treatment and respond with insolence to kindness. Running parallel to this innate baseness, there was in him a complicated neurasthenia of ill breeding, which, roused to activity on every occasion when he was in the wrong or was becoming a nuisance, meant that at the very moment when he had need of all his politeness, gentleness, gaiety, to disarm the Baron, he became sombre, petulant, tried to provoke discussions on matters where he knew that the other did not agree with him, maintained his own hostile attitude with a weakness of argument and a slashing violence which enhanced that weakness. For, very soon running short of arguments, he invented fresh ones as he went along, in which he displayed the full extent of his ignorance and folly. These were barely noticeable when he was in a friendly mood and sought only to please. On the contrary, nothing else was visible in his fits of sombre humour, when, from being inoffensive, they became odious. Whereupon M. de Charlus felt that he could en-

dure no more, that his only hope lay in a brighter morrow, while Morel, forgetting that the Baron was enabling him to live in the lap of luxury, gave an ironical smile, of condescending pity, and said: "I have never taken anything from anybody. Which means that there is nobody to whom I owe a word of thanks."

In the mean time, and as though he had been dealing with a man of the world, M. de Charlus continued to give vent to his rage, whether genuine or feigned, but in either case ineffective. It was not always so, however. Thus one day (which must be placed, as a matter of fact, subsequent to this initial period) when the Baron was returning with Charlie and myself from a luncheon party at the Verdurins', and expecting to spend the rest of the afternoon and the evening with the violinist at Doncières, the latter's dismissal of him, as soon as we left the train, with: "No, I've an engagement," caused M. de Charlus so keen a disappointment, that in spite of all his attempts to meet adversity with a brave face, I saw the tears trickling down and melting the paint beneath his eyes, as he stood helpless by the carriage door. Such was his grief that, since we intended, Albertine and I, to spend the rest of the day at Doncières, I whispered to her that I would prefer that we did not leave M. de Charlus by himself, as he seemed, I could not say why, to be unhappy. The dear girl readily assented. I then asked M. de Charlus if he would not like me to accompany him for a little. He also assented, but declined to put my "cousin" to any trouble. I found a certain charm (and one, doubtless, not to be repeated, since I had made up my mind to break with her), in saying to her quietly, as though she were my wife: "Go back home by

yourself, I shall see you this evening," and in hearing her, as a wife might, give me permission to do as I thought fit, and authorise me, if M. de Charlus, to whom she was attached, needed my company, to place myself at his disposal. We proceeded, the Baron and I, he waddling obesely, his jesuitical eyes downcast, and I following him, to a café where we were given beer. I felt M. de Charlus's eyes turning uneasily towards the execution of some plan. Suddenly he called for paper and ink, and began to write at an astonishing speed. While he covered sheet after sheet, his eyes glittered with furious fancies. When he had written eight pages: "May I ask you to do me a great service?" he said to me. "You will excuse my sealing this note. I am obliged to do so. You will take a carriage, a motor-car if you can find one, to get there as quickly as possible. You are certain to find Morel in his quarters, where he has gone to change his clothes. Poor boy, he tried to bluster a little when we parted, but you may be sure that his heart is fuller than mine. You will give him this note, and, if he asks you where you met me, you will tell him that you stopped at Doncières (which, for that matter, is the truth) to see Robert, which is not quite the truth perhaps, but that you met me with a person whom you do not know, that I seemed to be extremely angry, that you thought you heard something about sending seconds (I am, as a matter of fact, fighting a duel to-morrow). Whatever you do, don't say that I am asking for him, don't make any effort to bring him here, but if he wishes to come with you, don't prevent him from doing so. Go, my boy, it is for his good, you may be the means of averting a great tragedy. While you are away, I am going to write to my seconds. I have

prevented you from spending the afternoon with your cousin. I hope that she will bear me no ill will for that, indeed I am sure of it. For hers is a noble soul, and I know that she is one of the people who are strong enough not to resist the greatness of circumstances. You must thank her on my behalf. I am personally indebted to her, and I am glad that it should be so." I was extremely sorry for M. de Charlus; it seemed to me that Charlie might have prevented this duel, of which he was perhaps the cause, and I was revolted, if that were the case, that he should have gone off with such indifference, instead of staying to help his protector. My indignation was increased when, on reaching the house in which Morel lodged, I recognised the voice of the violinist, who, feeling the need of an outlet for his happiness, was singing boisterously: "Some Sunday morning, when the wedding-bells rrring!" If poor M. de Charlus had heard him, he who wished me to believe, and doubtless believed himself that Morel's heart at that moment was full! Charlie began to dance with joy when he caught sight of me. "Hallo, old boy! (excuse me, addressing you like that; in this damned military life, one picks up bad habits) what luck, seeing you. I have nothing to do all evening. Do let's go somewhere together. We can stay here if you like, or take a boat if you prefer that, or we can have some music, it's all the same to me." I told him that I was obliged to dine at Balbec, he seemed anxious that I should invite him to dine there also, but I refrained from doing so. "But if you're in such a hurry, why have you come here?" "I have brought you a note from M. de Charlus." At that moment all his gaiety vanished; his face contracted. "What! He can't leave me alone even

here. So I'm a slave, am I? Old boy, be a sport. I'm not going to open his letter. You can tell him that you couldn't find me." "Wouldn't it be better to open it, I fancy it contains something serious." "No, certainly not, you don't know all the lies, the infernal tricks that old scoundrel's up to. It's a dodge to make me go and see him. Very well! I'm not going, I want to have an evening in peace." "But isn't there going to be a duel tomorrow?" I asked Morel, whom I supposed to be equally well informed. "A duel?" he repeated with an air of stupefaction. "I never heard a word about it. After all, it doesn't matter a damn to me, the dirty old beast can go and get plugged in the guts if he likes. But wait a minute, this is interesting, I'm going to look at his letter after all. You can tell him that you left it here for me, in case I should come in." While Morel was speaking to me, I was looking with amazement at the beautiful books which M. de Charlus had given him, and which littered his room. The violinist having refused to accept those labelled: "I belong to the Baron" etc., a device which he felt to be insulting to himself, as a mark of vassalage, the Baron, with the sentimental ingenuity in which his ill-starred love abounded, had substituted others, originated by his ancestors, but ordered from the binder according to the circumstances of a melancholy friendship. Sometimes they were terse and confident, as *Spes mea* or *Expectata non eludet.* Sometimes merely resigned, as *J'attendrai.* Others were gallant: *Mesme plaisir du mestre,* or counselled chastity, such as that borrowed from the family of Simiane, sprinkled with azure towers and lilies, and given a fresh meaning: *Sustendant lilia turres.* Others, finally, were despairing, and appointed a meeting in

heaven with him who had spurned the donor upon earth: *Manet ultima caelo,* and (finding the grapes which he had failed to reach too sour, pretending not to have sought what he had not secured) M. de Charlus said in one: *Non mortale quod opto.* But I had not time to examine them all.

If M. de Charlus, in dashing this letter down upon paper had seemed to be carried away by the demon that was inspiring his flying pen, as soon as Morel had broken the seal (a leopard between two roses gules, with the motto: *atavis et armis*) he began to read the letter as feverishly as M. de Charlus had written it, and over those pages covered at breakneck speed his eye ran no less rapidly than the Baron's pen. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "this is the last straw! But where am I to find him? Heaven only knows where he is now." I suggested that if he made haste he might still find him perhaps at a tavern where he had ordered beer as a restorative. "I don't know whether I shall be coming back," he said to his landlady, and added *in petto,* "it will depend on how the cat jumps." A few minutes later we reached the café. I remarked M. de Charlus's expression at the moment when he caught sight of me. When he saw that I did not return unaccompanied, I could feel that his breath, his life were restored to him. Feeling that he could not get on that evening without Morel, he had pretended that somebody had told him that two officers of the regiment had spoken evil of him in connexion with the violinist and that he was going to send his seconds to call upon them. Morel had foreseen the scandal, his life in the regiment made impossible, and had hastened to the spot. In doing which he had not been altogether wrong.

For to make his falsehood more plausible, M. de Charlus had already written to two of his friends (one was Cottard) asking them to be his seconds. And, if the violinist had not appeared, we may be certain that, in the frantic state in which M. de Charlus then was (and to change his sorrow into rage), he would have sent them with a challenge to some officer or other with whom it would have been a relief to him to fight. During the interval, M. de Charlus, remembering that he came of a race that was of purer blood than the House of France, told himself that it was really very good of him to take so much trouble over the son of a butler whose employer he would not have condescended to know. On the other hand, if his only amusement, almost, was now in the society of disreputable persons, the profoundly ingrained habit which such persons have of not replying to a letter, of failing to keep an appointment without warning you beforehand, without apologising afterwards, aroused in him, since, often enough, his heart was involved, such a wealth of emotion and the rest of the time caused him such irritation, inconvenience and anger, that he would sometimes begin to regret the endless letters over nothing at all, the scrupulous exactitude of Ambassadors and Princes, who, even if, unfortunately, their personal charms left him cold, gave him at any rate some sort of peace of mind. Accustomed to Morel's ways, and knowing how little hold he had over him, how incapable he was of insinuating himself into a life in which friendships that were vulgar but consecrated by force of habit occupied too much space and time to leave a stray hour for the great nobleman, evicted, proud, and vainly imploring, M. de Charlus was so convinced that the musician was not coming, was

so afraid of losing him for ever if he went too far, that he could barely repress a cry of joy when he saw him appear. But feeling himself the victor, he felt himself bound to dictate the terms of peace and to extract from them such advantages as he might. "What are you doing here?" he said to him. "And you?" he went on, gazing at myself, "I told you, whatever you did, not to bring him back with you." "He didn't want to bring me," said Morel, turning upon M. de Charlus, in the artlessness of his coquetry, a glance conventionally mournful and languorously old-fashioned, with an air, which he doubtless thought to be irresistible, of wanting to kiss the Baron and to burst into tears. "It was I who insisted on coming in spite of him. I come, in the name of our friendship, to implore you on my bended knees not to commit this rash act." M. de Charlus was wild with joy. The reaction was almost too much for his nerves; he managed, however, to control them. "The friendship to which you appeal at a somewhat inopportune moment," he replied in a dry tone, "ought, on the contrary, to make you support me when I decide that I cannot allow the impertinences of a fool to pass unheeded. However, even if I chose to yield to the prayers of an affection which I have known better inspired, I should no longer be in a position to do so, my letters to my seconds have been sent off and I have no doubt of their consent. You have always behaved towards me like a little idiot and, instead of priding yourself, as you had every right to do, upon the predilection which I had shewn for you, instead of making known to the mob of serjeants or servants among whom the law of military service compels you to live, what a source of incomparable satisfaction a friendship

such as mine was to you, you have sought to make excuses for yourself, almost to make an idiotic merit of not being grateful enough. I know that in so doing," he went on, in order not to let it appear how deeply certain scenes had humiliated him, "you are guilty merely of having let yourself be carried away by the jealousy of others. But how is it that at your age you are childish enough (and a child ill-bred enough) not to have seen at once that your election by myself and all the advantages that must result for you from it were bound to excite jealousies, that all your comrades while they egged you on to quarrel with me were plotting to take your place? I have not thought it necessary to tell you of the letters that I have received in that connexion from all the people in whom you place most confidence. I scorn the overtures of those flunkeys as I scorn their ineffective mockery. The only person for whom I care is yourself, since I am fond of you, but affection has its limits and you ought to have guessed as much." Harsh as the word flunkey might sound in the ears of Morel, whose father had been one, but precisely because his father had been one, the explanation of all social misadventures by "jealousy," an explanation fatuous and absurd, but of inexhaustible value, which with a certain class never fails to "catch on" as infallibly as the old tricks of the stage with a theatrical audience or the threat of the clerical peril in a parliament, found in him an adherence hardly less solid than in Françoise, or the servants of Mme. de Guermantes, for whom jealousy was the sole cause of the misfortunes that beset humanity. He had no doubt that his comrades had tried to oust him from his position and was all the more wretched at the thought of this disastrous, albeit imaginary duel. "Oh!

How dreadful," exclaimed Charlie. "I shall never hold up my head again. But oughtn't they to see you before they go and call upon this officer?" "I don't know, I suppose they ought. I've sent word to one of them that I shall be here all evening and can give him his instructions." "I hope that before he comes I can make you listen to reason; you will, anyhow, let me stay with you," Morel asked him tenderly. This was all that M. de Charlus wanted. He did not however yield at once. "You would do wrong to apply in this case the 'Whoso loveth well, chasteneth well' of the proverb, for it is yourself whom I loved well, and I intend to chasten even after our parting those who have basely sought to do you an injury. Until now, their inquisitive insinuations, when they dared to ask me how a man like myself could mingle with a boy of your sort, sprung from the gutter, I have answered only in the words of the motto of my La Rochefoucauld cousins: ''Tis my pleasure.' I have indeed pointed out to you more than once that this pleasure was capable of becoming my chiefest pleasure, without there resulting from your arbitrary elevation any degradation of myself." And in an impulse of almost insane pride he exclaimed, raising his arms in the air: "*Tantus ab uno splendor!* To condescend is not to descend," he went on in a calmer tone, after this delirious outburst of pride and joy. "I hope at least that my two adversaries, notwithstanding their inferior rank, are of a blood that I can shed without reproach. I have made certain discreet inquiries in that direction which have reassured me. If you retained a shred of gratitude towards me, you ought on the contrary to be proud to see that for your sake I am reviving the bellicose humour of my ancestors, saying

like them in the event of a fatal issue, now that I have learned what a little rascal you are: 'Death to me is life.'" And M. de Charlus said this sincerely, not only because of his love for Morel, but because a martial instinct which he quaintly supposed to have come down to him from his ancestors filled him with such joy at the thought of fighting that this duel, which he had originally invented with the sole object of making Morel come to him, he could not now abandon without regret. He had never engaged in any affair of the sort without at once imagining himself the victor, and identifying himself with the illustrious Constable de Guermantes, whereas in the case of anyone else this same action of taking the field appeared to him to be of the utmost insignificance. "I am sure it will be a fine sight," he said to us in all sincerity, dwelling upon each word. "To see Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon,* what is that but tripe? Mounet-Sully in *Oedipus,* tripe! At the most it assumes a certain pallid transfiguration when it is performed in the Arena of Nîmes. But what is it compared to that unimaginable spectacle, the lineal descendant of the Constable engaged in battle." And at the mere thought of such a thing, M. de Charlus, unable to contain himself for joy, began to make passes in the air which recalled Molière, made us take the precaution of drawing our glasses closer, and fear that, when the swords crossed, the combatants, doctor and seconds would at once be wounded. "What a tempting spectacle it would be for a painter. You who know Monsieur Elstir," he said to me," you ought to bring him." I replied that he was not in the neighbourhood. M. de Charlus suggested that he might be summoned by telegraph. "Oh! I say it in his interest," he

added in response to my silence. "It is always interesting for a master—which he is, in my opinion—to record such an instance of racial survival. And they occur perhaps once in a century."

But if M. de Charlus was enchanted at the thought of a duel which he had meant at first to be entirely fictitious, Morel was thinking with terror of the stories that might be spread abroad by the regimental band and might, thanks to the stir that would be made by this duel, penetrate to the holy of holies in the Rue Bergère. Seeing in his mind's eye the "class" fully informed, he became more and more insistent with M. de Charlus, who continued to gesticulate before the intoxicating idea of a duel. He begged the Baron to allow him not to leave him until the day after the next, the supposed day of the duel, so that he might keep him within sight and try to make him listen to the voice of reason. So tender a proposal triumphed over M. de Charlus's final hesitations. He said that he would try to find a way out of it, that he would postpone his final decision for two days. In this fashion, by not making any definite arrangement at once, M. de Charlus knew that he could keep Charlie with him for at least two days, and make use of the time to fix future engagements with him in exchange for his abandoning the duel, an exercise, he said, which in itself delighted him and which he would not forego without regret. And in saying this he was quite sincere, for he had always enjoyed taking the field when it was a question of crossing swords or exchanging shots with an adversary. Cottard arrived at length, although extremely late, for, delighted to act as second but even more upset by the prospect, he had been obliged to halt at all the cafés or farms by the

way, asking the occupants to be so kind as to shew him the way to "No. 100" or "a certain place." As soon as he arrived, the Baron took him into another room, for he thought it more correct that Charlie and I should not be present at the interview, and excelled in making the most ordinary room serve for the time being as throne-room or council chamber. When he was alone with Cottard he thanked him warmly, but informed him that it seemed probable that the remark which had been repeated to him had never really been made, and requested that, in view of this, the Doctor would be so good as let the other second know that, barring possible complications, the incident might be regarded as closed. Now that the prospect of danger was withdrawn, Cottard was disappointed. He was indeed tempted for a moment to give vent to anger, but he remembered that one of his masters, who had enjoyed the most successful medical career of his generation, having failed to enter the Academy at his first election by two votes only, had put a brave face on it and had gone and shaken hands with his successful rival. And so the Doctor refrained from any expression of indignation which could have made no difference, and, after murmuring, he the most timorous of men, that there were certain things which one could not overlook, added that it was better so, that this solution delighted him. M. de Charlus, desirous of shewing his gratitude to the Doctor, just as the Duke his brother would have straightened the collar of my father's greatcoat or rather as a Duchess would put her arm round the waist of a plebeian lady, brought his chair close to the Doctor's, notwithstanding the dislike that he felt for the other. And, not only without any physical pleasure, but having first to overcome a

physical repulsion, as a Guermantes, not as an invert, in taking leave of the Doctor, he clasped his hand and caressed it for a moment with the affection of a rider rubbing his horse's nose and giving it a lump of sugar. But Cottard, who had never allowed the Baron to see that he had so much as heard the vaguest rumours as to his morals, but nevertheless regarded him in his private judgment as one of the class of "abnormals" (indeed, with his habitual inaccuracy in the choice of terms, and in the most serious tone, he said of one of M. Verdurin's footmen: "Isn't he the Baron's mistress?"), persons of whom he had little personal experience; imagined that this stroking of his hand was the immediate prelude to an act of violence in anticipation of which, the duel being a mere pretext, he had been enticed into a trap and led by the Baron into this remote apartment where he was about to be forcibly outraged. Not daring to stir from his chair, to which fear kept him glued, he rolled his eyes in terror, as though he had fallen into the hands of a savage who, for all he could tell, fed upon human flesh. At length M. de Charlus, releasing his hand and anxious to be hospitable to the end, said: "Won't you come and take something with us, as the saying is, what in the old days used to be called a *mazagran* or a *gloria,* drinks that are no longer to be found except, as archaeological curiosities, in the plays of Labiche and the cafés of Doncières. A *gloria* would be distinctly suitable to the place, eh?, and to the occasion, what do you say?" "I am President of the Anti-Alcohol League," replied Cottard. "Some country sawbones has only got to pass, and it will be said that I do not practise what I preach. *Os homini sublime dedit coelumque tueri,*" he added, not that this had any bearing

on the matter, but because his stock of Latin quotations was extremely limited, albeit sufficient to astound his pupils. M. de Charlus shrugged his shoulders and led Cottard back to where we were, after exacting a promise of secrecy which was all the more important to him since the motive for the abortive duel was purely imaginary. It must on no account reach the ears of the officer whom he had arbitrarily selected as his adversary. While the four of us sat there drinking, Mme. Cottard, who had been waiting for her husband outside, where M. de Charlus could see her quite well, though he had made no effort to summon her, came in and greeted the Baron, who held out his hand to her as though to a housemaid, without rising from his chair, partly in the manner of a king receiving homage, partly as a snob who does not wish a woman of humble appearance to sit down at his table, partly as an egoist who enjoys being alone with his friends, and does not wish to be bothered. So Mme. Cottard remained standing while she talked to M. de Charlus and her husband. But, possibly because politeness, the knowledge of what "ought to be done," is not the exclusive privilege of the Guermantes, and may all of a sudden illuminate and guide the most uncertain brains, or else because, himself constantly unfaithful to his wife, Cottard felt at odd moments, as a sort of compensation, the need to protect her against anyone else who failed in his duty to her, the Doctor quickly frowned, a thing I had never seen him do before, and, without consulting M. de Charlus, said in a tone of authority: "Come, Léontine, don't stand about like that, sit down." "But are you sure I'm not disturbing you?" Mme. Cottard inquired timidly of M. de Charlus, who, surprised by the Doctor's

tone, had made no observation. Whereupon, without giving him a second chance, Cottard repeated with authority: "I told you to sit down."

Presently the party broke up, and then M. de Charlus said to Morel: "I conclude from all this business, which has ended more happily than you deserved, that you are incapable of looking after yourself and that, at the expiry of your military service, I must lead you back myself to your father, like the Archangel Raphael sent by God to the young Tobias." And the Baron began to smile with an air of grandeur, and a joy which Morel, to whom the prospect of being thus led home afforded no pleasure, did not appear to share. In the exhilaration of comparing himself to the Archangel, and Morel to the son of Tobit, M. de Charlus no longer thought of the purpose of his speech which had been to explore the ground and see whether, as he hoped, Morel would consent to come with him to Paris. Intoxicated with his love or with his self-love, the Baron did not see or pretended not to see the violinist's wry grimace, for, leaving him by himself in the café, he said to me with a proud smile: "Did you notice how, when I compared him to the son of Tobit, he became wild with joy? That was because, being extremely intelligent, he at once understood that the Father in whose company he was henceforth to live was not his father after the flesh, who must be some horrible valet with moustaches, but his spiritual father, that is to say Myself. What a triumph for him! How proudly he reared his head! What joy he felt at having understood me. I am sure that he will now repeat day by day: 'O God Who didst give the blessed Archangel Raphael as *guide* to thy servant Tobias, upon a long journey, grant to us,

Thy servants, that we may ever be protected by him and armed with his succour.' I had no need even," added the Baron, firmly convinced that he would one day sit before the Throne of God, "to tell him that I was the heavenly messenger, he realised it for himself, and was struck dumb with joy!" And M. de Charlus (whom his joy, on the contrary, did not deprive of speech), regardless of the passers-by who turned to stare at him, supposing that he must be a lunatic, cried out by himself and at the top of his voice raising his hands in the air: "Alleluia!"

This reconciliation gave but a temporary respite to M. de Charlus's torments; often, when Morel had gone out on training too far away for M. de Charlus to be able to go and visit him or to send me to talk to him, he would write the Baron desperate and affectionate letters, in which he assured him that he was going to put an end to his life because, owing to a ghastly affair, he must have twenty-five thousand francs. He did not mention what this ghastly affair was, and had he done so, it would doubtless have been an invention. As far as the money was concerned, M. de Charlus would willingly have sent him it, had he not felt that it would make Charlie independent of him and free to receive the favours of some one else. And so he refused, and his telegrams had the dry, cutting tone of his voice. When he was certain of their effect, he hoped that Morel would never forgive him, for, knowing very well that it was the contrary that would happen, he could not help dwelling upon all the drawbacks that would be revived with this inevitable tie. But, if no answer came from Morel, he lay awake all night, had not a moment's peace, so great is the number of the things of which we live in ignorance, and of the

interior and profound realities that remain hidden from us. And so he would form every conceivable supposition as to the enormity which put Morel in need of twenty-five thousand francs, gave it every possible shape, labelled it with, one after another, many proper names. I believe that at such moments M. de Charlus (in spite of the fact that his snobbishness, which was now diminishing, had already been overtaken if not outstripped by his increasing curiosity as to the ways of the lower orders) must have recalled with a certain longing the lovely, many-coloured whirl of the fashionable gatherings at which the most charming men and women sought his company only for the disinterested pleasure that it afforded them, where nobody would have dreamed of "doing him down," of inventing a "ghastly affair," on the strength of which one is prepared to take one's life, if one does not at once receive twenty-five thousand francs. I believe that then, and perhaps because he had after all remained more "Combray" at heart than myself, and had grafted a feudal dignity upon his Germanic pride, he must have felt that one cannot with impunity lose one's heart to a servant, that the lower orders are by no means the same thing as society, that in short he did not "get on" with the lower orders as I have always done.

The next station upon the little railway, Maineville, reminds me of an incident in which Morel and M. de Charlus were concerned. Before I speak of it, I ought to mention that the halt of the train at Maineville (when one was escorting to Balbec a fashionable stranger who, to avoid giving trouble, preferred not to stay at la Raspelière) was the occasion of scenes less painful than that which I am just about to describe. The stranger, having

his light luggage with him in the train, generally found that the Grand Hotel was rather too far away, but, as there was nothing until one came to Balbec except small bathing places with uncomfortable villas, had, yielding to a preference for comfortable surroundings, resigned himself to the long journey when, as the train came to a standstill at Maineville, he saw the Palace staring him in the face, and never suspected that it was a house of ill fame. "But don't let us go any farther," he would invariably say to Mme. Cottard, a woman well-known for her practical judgment and sound advice. "There is the very thing I want. What is the use of going on to Balbec, where I certainly shan't find anything better. I can tell at a glance that it has all the modern comforts; I can quite well invite Mme. Verdurin there, for I intend, in return for her hospitality, to give a few little parties in her honour. She won't have so far to come as if I stay at Balbec. This seems to me the very place for her, and for your wife, my dear Professor. There are bound to be sitting rooms, we can have the ladies there. Between you and me, I can't imagine why Mme. Verdurin didn't come and settle here instead of taking la Raspelière. It is far healthier than an old house like la Raspelière, which is bound to be damp, and is not clean either, they have no hot water laid on, one can never get a wash. Now, Maineville strikes me as being far more attractive. Mme. Verdurin would have played the hostess here to perfection. However, tastes differ; I intend, anyhow, to remain here. Mme. Cottard, won't you come along with me; we shall have to be quick, for the train will be starting again in a minute. You can pilot me through that house, which you must know inside out, for you must

often have visited it. It is the ideal setting for you." The others would have the greatest difficulty in making the unfortunate stranger hold his tongue, and still more in preventing him from leaving the train, while he, with the obstinacy which often arises from a blunder, insisted, gathered his luggage together and refused to listen to a word until they had assured him that neither Mme. Verdurin nor Mme. Cottard would ever come to call upon him there. "Anyhow, I am going to make my headquarters there. Mme. Verdurin has only to write, if she wishes to see me."

The incident that concerns Morel was of a more highly specialised order. There were others, but I confine myself at present, as the train halts and the porter calls out "Doncières," "Grattevast," "Maineville" etc., to noting down the particular memory that the watering-place or garrison town recalls to me. I have already mentioned Maineville (*media villa*) and the importance that it had acquired from that luxurious establishment of women which had recently been built there, not without arousing futile protests from the mothers of families. But before I proceed to say why Maineville is associated in my memory with Morel and M. de Charlus, I must make a note of the disproportion (which I shall have occasion to examine more thoroughly later on) between the importance that Morel attached to keeping certain hours free, and the triviality of the occupations to which he pretended to devote them, this same disproportion recurring amid the explanations of another sort which he gave to M. de Charlus. He, who played the disinterested artist for the Baron's benefit (and might do so without risk, in view of the generosity of his protector), when he wished

to have the evening to himself, in order to give a lesson, etc., never failed to add to his excuse the following words, uttered with a smile of cupidity: "Besides, there may be forty francs to be got out of it. That's always something. You will let me go, for, don't you see, it's all to my advantage. Damn it all, I haven't got a regular income like you, I have my way to make in the world, it's a chance of earning a little money." Morel, in professing his anxiety to give his lesson, was not altogether insincere. For one thing, it is false to say that money has no colour. A new way of earning them gives a fresh lustre to coins that are tarnished with use. Had he really gone out to give a lesson, it is probable that a couple of louis handed to him as he left the house by a girl pupil would have produced a different effect on him from a couple of louis coming from the hand of M. de Charlus. Besides, for a couple of louis the richest of men would travel miles, which become leagues when one is the son of a valet. But frequently M. de Charlus had his doubts as to the reality of the violin lesson, doubts which were increased by the fact that often the musician pleaded excuses of another sort, entirely disinterested from the material point of view, and at the same time absurd. In this Morel could not help presenting an image of his life, but one that deliberately, and unconsciously too, he so darkened that only certain parts of it could be made out. For a whole month he placed himself at M. de Charlus's disposal, on condition that he might keep his evenings free, for he was anxious to put in a regular attendance at a course of algebra. Come and see M. de Charlus after the class? Oh, that was impossible, the classes went on, sometimes, very late. "Even after two o'clock in the

morning?" the Baron asked. "Sometimes." "But you can learn algebra just as easily from a book." "More easily, for I don't get very much out of the lectures." "Very well, then! Besides, algebra can't be of any use to you." "I like it. It soothes my nerves." "It cannot be algebra that makes him ask leave to go out at night," M. de Charlus said to himself. "Can he be working for the police?" In any case Morel, whatever objection might be made, reserved certain evening hours, whether for algebra or for the violin. On one occasion it was for neither, but for the Prince de Guermantes who, having come down for a few days to that part of the coast, to pay the Princesse de Luxembourg a visit, picked up the musician, without knowing who he was or being recognised by him either, and offered him fifty francs to spend the night with him in the brothel at Maineville; a twofold pleasure for Morel, in the profit received from M. de Guermantes and in the delight of being surrounded by women whose sunburned breasts would be visible to the naked eye. In some way or other M. de Charlus got wind of what had occurred and of the place appointed, but did not discover the name of the seducer. Mad with jealousy, and in the hoping of finding out who he was, he telegraphed to Jupien, who arrived two days later, and when, early in the following week, Morel announced that he would again be absent, the Baron asked Jupien if he would undertake to bribe the woman who kept the establishment, and make her promise to hide the Baron and himself in some place where they could witness what occurred. "That's all right. I'll see to it, dearie," Jupien assured the Baron. It is hard to imagine to what extent this anxiety was agitating, and by so doing had

momentarily enriched the mind of M. de Charlus. Love is responsible in this way for regular volcanic upheavals of the mind. In his, which, a few days earlier, resembled a plain so uniform that as far as the eye could reach it would have been impossible to make out an idea rising above the level surface, there had suddenly sprung into being, hard as stone, a chain of mountains, but mountains as elaborately carved as if some sculptor, instead of quarrying and carting his marble from them, had chiselled it on the spot, in which there writhed in vast titanic groups Fury, Jealousy, Curiosity, Envy, Hatred, Suffering, Pride, Terror and Love.

Meanwhile the evening on which Morel was to be absent had come. Jupien's mission had proved successful. He and the Baron were to be there about eleven o'clock, and would be put in a place of concealment. When they were still three streets away from this gorgeous house of prostitution (to which people came from all the fashionable resorts in the neighborhood), M. de Charlus had begun to walk upon tiptoe, to disguise his voice, to beg Jupien not to speak so loud, lest Morel should hear them from inside. Whereas, on creeping stealthily into the entrance hall, M. de Charlus, who was not accustomed to places of the sort, found himself, to his terror and amazement, in a gathering more clamorous than the Stock Exchange or a sale room. It was in vain that he begged the girls who gathered round him to moderate their voices; for that matter their voices were drowned by the stream of announcements and awards made by an old "assistant matron" in a very brown wig, her face crackled with the gravity of a Spanish attorney or priest, who kept shouting at every minute in a voice of

thunder, ordering the doors to be alternately opened and shut, like a policeman regulating the flow of traffic: "Take this gentleman to twenty-eight, the Spanish room." "Let no more in." "Open the door again, these gentlemen want Mademoiselle Noémie. She's expecting them in the Persian parlour." M. de Charlus was as terrified as a countryman who has to cross the boulevards; while, to take a simile infinitely less sacrilegious than the subject represented on the capitals of the porch of the old church of Corleville, the voices of the young maids repeated in a lower tone, unceasingly, the assistant matron's orders, like the catechisms that we hear school-children chanting beneath the echoing vault of a parish church in the country. However great his alarm, M. de Charlus who, in the street, had been trembling lest he should make himself heard, convinced in his own mind that Morel was at the window, was perhaps not so frightened after all in the din of those huge staircases on which one realised that from the rooms nothing could be seen. Coming at length to the end of his calvary, he found Mlle. Noémie, who was to conceal him with Jupien, but began by shutting him up in a sumptuously furnished Persian sitting-room from which he could see nothing at all. She told him that Morel had asked for some orangeade, and that as soon as he was served the two visitors would be taken to a room with a transparent panel. In the mean time, as some one was calling for her, she promised them, like a fairy godmother, that to help them to pass the time she was going to send them a "clever little lady." For she herself was called away. The clever little lady wore a Persian wrapper, which she proposed to remove. M. de Charlus begged her to do nothing of the sort, and she

rang for champagne which cost 40 francs a bottle. Morel, as a matter of fact, was, during this time, with the Prince de Guermantes; he had, for form's sake, pretended to go into the wrong room by mistake, had entered one in which there were two women, who had made haste to leave the two gentlemen undisturbed. M. de Charlus knew nothing of this, but was fidgeting with rage, trying to open the doors, sent for Mlle. Noémie, who, hearing the clever little lady give M. de Charlus certain information about Morel which was not in accordance with what she herself had told Jupien, banished her promptly, and sent presently, as a substitute for the clever little lady, a "dear little lady" who exhibited nothing more but told them how respectable the house was and called, like her predecessor, for champagne. The Baron, foaming with rage, sent again for Mlle. Noémie, who said to them: "Yes, it is taking rather long, the ladies are doing poses, he doesn't look as if he wanted to do anything." Finally, yielding to the promises, the threats of the Baron, Mlle. Noémie went away with an air of irritation, assuring them that they would not be kept waiting more than five minutes. The five minutes stretched out into an hour, after which Noémie came and tiptoed in front of M. de Charlus, blind with rage, and Jupien plunged in misery, to a door which stood ajar, telling them: "You'll see splendidly from here. However, it's not very interesting just at present, he is with three ladies, he is telling them about life in his regiment." At length the Baron was able to see through the cleft of the door and also the reflexion in the mirrors beyond. But a deadly terror forced him to lean back against the wall. It was indeed Morel that he saw before him, but, as though the pagan mys-

teries and Enchantments still existed, it was rather the shade of Morel, Morel embalmed, not even Morel restored to life like Lazarus, an apparition of Morel, a phantom of Morel, Morel "walking" or "called up" in that room (in which the walls and couches everywhere repeated the emblems of sorcery), that was visible a few feet away from him, in profile. Morel had, as though he were already dead, lost all his colour; among these women, with whom one might have expected him to be making merry, he remained livid, fixed in an artificial immobility; to drink the glass of champagne that stood before him, his arm, sapped of its strength, tried in vain to reach out, and dropped back again. One had the impression of that ambiguous state implied by a religion which speaks of immortality but means by it something that does not exclude annihilation. The women were plying him with questions: "You see," Mlle. Noémie whispered to the Baron, "they are talking to him about his life in the regiment, it's amusing, isn't it?"—here she laughed—"You're glad you came? He is calm, isn't he," she added, as though she were speaking of a dying man. The women's questions came thick and fast, but Morel, inanimate, had not the strength to answer them. Even the miracle of a whispered word did not occur. M. de Charlus hesitated for barely a moment before he grasped what had really happened, namely that, whether from clumsiness on Jupien's part when he had called to make the arrangements, or from the expansive power of a secret lodged in any breast, which means that no secret is ever kept, or from the natural indiscretion of these ladies, or from their fear of the police, Morel had been told that two gentlemen had paid a large sum to be allowed to spy

on him, unseen hands had spirited away the Prince de Guermantes, metamorphosed into three women, and had placed the unhappy Morel, trembling, paralysed with fear, in such a position that if M. de Charlus had but a poor view of him, he, terrorised, speechless, not daring to lift his glass for fear of letting it fall, had a perfect view of the Baron.

The story moreover had no happier ending for the Prince de Guermantes. When he had been sent away, so that M. de Charlus should not see him, furious at his disappointment, without suspecting who was responsible for it, he had implored Morel, still without letting him know who he was, to make an appointment with him for the following night in the tiny villa which he had taken and which, despite the shortness of his projected stay in it, he had, obeying the same insensate habit which we have already observed in Mme. de Villeparisis, decorated with a number of family keepsakes, so that he might feel more at home. And so, next day, Morel, turning his head every moment, trembling with fear of being followed and spied upon by M. de Charlus, had finally, having failed to observe any suspicious passer-by, entered the villa. A valet shewed him into the sitting-room, telling him that he would inform "Monsieur" (his master had warned him not to utter the word "Prince" for fear of arousing suspicions). But when Morel found himself alone, and went to the mirror to see that his forelock was not disarranged, he felt as though he were the victim of a hallucination. The photographs on the mantelpiece (which the violinist recognised, for he had seen them in M. de Charlus's room) of the Princesse de Guermantes, the Duchesse de Luxembourg, Mme. de Villeparisis, left

him at first petrified with fright. At the same moment he caught sight of the photograph of M. de Charlus, which was placed a little behind the rest. The Baron seemed to be concentrating upon Morel a strange, fixed glare. Mad with terror, Morel, recovering from his first stupor, never doubting that this was a trap into which M. de Charlus had led him in order to put his fidelity to the test, sprang at one bound down the steps of the villa and set off along the road as fast as his legs would carry him, and when the Prince (thinking he had kept a casual acquaintance waiting sufficiently long, and not without asking himself whether it were quite prudent and whether the person might not be dangerous) entered the room, he found nobody there. In vain did he and his valet, afraid of burglary, and armed with revolvers, search the whole house, which was not large, every corner of the garden, the basement; the companion of whose presence he had been certain had completely vanished. He met him several times in the course of the week that followed. But on each occasion it was Morel, the dangerous person, who turned tail and fled, as though the Prince were more dangerous still. Confirmed in his suspicions, Morel never outgrew them, and even in Paris the sight of the Prince de Guermantes was enough to make him take to his heels. Whereby M. de Charlus was protected from a betrayal which filled him with despair, and avenged, without ever having imagined such a thing, still less how it came about.

But already my memories of what I have been told about all this are giving place to others, for the B. A. G., resuming its slow crawl, continues to set down or take up passengers at the following stations.

At Grattevast, where his sister lived with whom he had been spending the afternoon, there would sometimes appear M. Pierre de Verjus, Comte de Crécy (who was called simply the Comte de Crécy), a gentleman without means but of the highest nobility, whom I had come to know through the Cambremers, although he was by no means intimate with them. As he was reduced to an extremely modest, almost a penurious existence, I felt that a cigar, a "drink" were things that gave him so much pleasure that I formed the habit, on the days when I could not see Albertine, of inviting him to Balbec. A man of great refinement, endowed with a marvellous power of self-expression, snow-white hair, and a pair of charming blue eyes, he generally spoke in a faint murmur, very delicately, of the comforts of life in a country house, which he had evidently known from experience, and also of pedigrees. On my inquiring what was the badge engraved on his ring, he told me with a modest smile: "It is a branch of verjuice." And he added with a relish, as though sipping a vintage: "Our arms are a branch of verjuice—symbolic, since my name is Verjus—slipped and leaved vert." But I fancy that he would have been disappointed if at Balbec I had offered him nothing better to drink than verjuice. He liked the most expensive wines, because he had had to go without them, because of his profound knowledge of what he was going without, because he had a palate, perhaps also because he had an exorbitant thirst. And so when I invited him to dine at Balbec, he would order the meal with a refinement of skill, but ate a little too much, and drank copiously, made them warm the wines that needed warming, place those that needed cooling upon ice. Before dinner and

after he would give the right date or number for a port or an old brandy, as he would have given the date of the creation of a marquisate which was not generally known but with which he was no less familiar.

As I was in Aimé's eyes a favoured customer, he was delighted that I should give these special dinners and would shout to the waiters: "Quick, lay number 25;" he did not even say "lay" but "lay me," as though the table were for his own use. And, as the language of head waiters is not quite the same as that of sub-heads, assistants, boys, and so forth, when the time came for me to ask for the bill he would say to the waiter who had served us, making a continuous, soothing gesture with the back of his hand, as though he were trying to calm a horse that was ready to take the bit in its teeth: "Don't go too fast" (in adding up the bill), "go gently, very gently." Then, as the waiter was retiring with this guidance, Aimé, fearing lest his recommendations might not be carried out to the letter, would call him back: "Here, let me make it out." And as I told him not to bother: "It's one of my principles that we ought never, as the saying is, to sting a customer." As for the manager, since my guest was attired simply, always in the same clothes, which were rather threadbare (albeit nobody would so well have practised the art of dressing expensively, like one of Balzac's dandies, had he possessed the means), he confined himself, out of respect for me, to watching from a distance to see that everything was all right, and ordering, with a glance, a wedge to be placed under one leg of the table which was not steady. This was not to say that he was not qualified, though he concealed his early struggles, to lend a hand like anyone else. It required some excep-

tional circumstance nevertheless to induce him one day to carve the turkey-poults himself. I was out, but I heard afterwards that he carved them with a sacerdotal majesty, surrounded, at a respectful distance from the service-table, by a ring of waiters who were endeavouring thereby not so much to learn the art as to make themselves conspicuously visible, and stood gaping in open-mouthed admiration. Visible to the manager, for that matter (as he plunged a slow gaze into the flanks of his victims, and no more removed his eyes, filled with a sense of his exalted mission, from them than if he had been expected to read in them some augury), they were certainly not. The hierophant was not conscious of my absence even. When he heard of it, he was distressed: "What, you didn't see me carving the turkey-poults myself?" I replied that having failed, so far, to see Rome, Venice, Siena, the Prado, the Dresden gallery, the Indies, Sarah in *Phèdre*, I had learned to resign myself, and that I would add his carving of turkey-poults to my list. The comparison with the dramatic art (Sarah in *Phèdre*) was the only one that he seemed to understand, for he had already been told by me that on days of gala performances the elder Coquelin had accepted a beginner's parts, even that of a character who says but a single line or nothing at all. "It doesn't matter, I am sorry for your sake. When shall I be carving again? It will need some great event, it will need a war." (It did, as a matter of fact, need the armistice.) From that day onwards, the calendar was changed, time was reckoned thus: "That was the day after the day I carved the turkeys myself." "That's right, a week after the manager carved the turkeys himself." And so this prosectomy furnished, like

the Nativity of Christ or the Hegira, the starting point for a calendar different from the rest, but neither so extensively adopted nor so long observed.

The sadness of M. de Crécy's life was due, just as much as to his no longer keeping horses and a succulent table, to his mixing exclusively with people who were capable of supposing that Cambremers and Guermantes were one and the same thing. When he saw that I knew that Legrandin, who had now taken to calling himself Legrand de Méséglise, had no sort of right to that name, being moreover heated by the wine that he was drinking, he broke out in a transport of joy. His sister said to me with an understanding air: "My brother is never so happy as when he has a chance of talking to you." He felt indeed that he was alive now that he had discovered somebody who knew the unimportance of the Cambremers and the greatness of the Guermantes, somebody for whom the social universe existed. So, after the burning of all the libraries on the face of the globe and the emergence of a race entirely unlettered, an old Latin scholar would recover his confidence in life if he heard somebody quoting a line of Horace. And so, if he never left the train without saying to me: "When is our next little gathering?", it was not so much with the hunger of a parasite as with the gluttony of a savant, and because he regarded our symposia at Balbec as an opportunity for talking about subjects which were precious to him and of which he was never able to talk to anyone else, and analogous in that way to those dinners at which assemble on certain specified dates, round the particularly succulent board of the Union Club, the Society of Bibliophiles. He was extremely modest, so far as his own family was con-

cerned, and it was not from M. de Crécy that I learned that it was a very great family indeed, and a genuine branch transplanted to France of the English family which bears the title of Crecy. When I learned that he was a true Crécy, I told him that one of Mme. de Guermantes's nieces had married an American named Charles Crecy, and said that I did not suppose there was any connexion between them. "None," he said. "Any more than—not, of course, that my family is so distinguished—heaps of Americans who call themselves Montgomery, Berry, Chandos or Capel have with the families of Pembroke, Buckingham or Essex, or with the Duc de Berry." I thought more than once of telling him, as a joke, that I knew Mme. Swann, who as a courtesan had been known at one time by the name Odette de Crécy; but even if the Duc d'Alençon had shewn no resentment when people mentioned in front of him Émilienne d'Alençon, I did not feel that I was on sufficiently intimate terms with M. de Crécy to carry a joke so far. "He comes of a very great family," M. de Montsurvent said to me one day. "His family name is Saylor." And he went on to say that on the wall of his old castle above Incarville, which was now almost uninhabitable and which he, although born to a great fortune, was now too much impoverished to put in repair, was still to be read the old motto of the family. I thought this motto very fine, whether applied to the impatience of a predatory race niched in that eyrie from which its members must have swooped down in the past, or at the present day, to its contemplation of its own decline, awaiting the approach of death in that towering, grim retreat. It is, indeed, in this double sense that this motto plays upon the name Saylor, in the words: "*Ne sçais l'heure.*"

At Hermenonville there would get in sometimes M. de Chevregny, whose name, Brichot told us, signified like that of Mgr. de Cabrières, a place where goats assemble. He was related to the Cambremers, for which reason, and from a false idea of what was fashionable, the latter often invited him to Féterne, but only when they had no other guests to dazzle. Living all the year round at Beausoleil, M. de Chevregny had remained more provincial than they. And so when he went for a few weeks to Paris, there was not a moment to waste if he was to "see everything" in the time; so much so that occasionally, a little dazed by the number of spectacles too rapidly digested, when he was asked if he had seen a particular play he would find that he was no longer sure. But this uncertainty was rare, for he had that detailed knowledge of Paris only to be found in people who seldom go there. He advised me which of the "novelties" I ought to see ("It's worth your while"), regarding them however solely from the point of view of the pleasant evening that they might help to spend, and so completely ignoring the aesthetic point of view as never to suspect that they might indeed constitute a "novelty" occasionally in the history of art. So it was that, speaking of everything in the same tone, he told us: "We went once to the Opéra-Comique, but the show there is nothing much. It's called *Pelléas et Mélisande*. It's rubbish. Périer always acts well, but it's better to see him in something else. At the Gymnase, on the other hand, they're doing *La Châtelaine*. We went again to it twice; don't miss it, whatever you do, it's well worth seeing; besides, it's played to perfection; you have Frévalles, Marie Magnier, Baron fils;" and he went on to quote the names of actors of whom I had

never heard, and without prefixing Monsieur, Madame or Mademoiselle, like the Duc de Guermantes, who used to speak in the same ceremoniously contemptuous tone of the "songs of Mademoiselle Yvette Guilbert" and the "experiments of Monsieur Charcot." This was not M. de Chevregny's way, he said "Cornaglia and Dehelly," as he might have said "Voltaire and Montesquieu." For in him, with regard to actors as to everything that was Parisian, the aristocrat's desire to shew his scorn was overcome by the desire to appear on familiar terms of the provincial.

Immediately after the first dinner-party that I had attended at la Raspelière with what was still called at Féterne "the young couple," albeit M. and Mme. de Cambremer were no longer, by any means, in their first youth, the old Marquise had written me one of those letters which one can pick out by their handwriting from among a thousand. She said to me: "Bring your delicious—charming—nice cousin. It will be a delight, a pleasure," always avoiding, and with such unerring dexterity, the sequence that the recipient of her letter would naturally have expected, that I finally changed my mind as to the nature of these diminuendoes, decided that they were deliberate, and found in them the same corruption of taste—transposed into the social key—that drove Sainte-Beuve to upset all the normal relations between words, to alter any expression that was at all conventional. Two methods, taught probably by different masters, came into conflict in this epistolary style, the second making Mme. de Cambremer redeem the monotony of her multiple adjectives by employing them in a descending scale, by avoiding an ending upon the perfect

chord. On the other hand, I was inclined to see in these inverse gradations, not an additional refinement, as when they were the handiwork of the Dowager Marquise, but an additional clumsiness whenever they were employed by the Marquis her son or by his lady cousins. For throughout the family, to quite a remote degree of kinship and in admiring imitation of aunt Zélia, the rule of the three adjectives was held in great honour, as was a certain enthusiastic way of catching your breath when you were talking. An imitation that had passed into the blood, moreover; and whenever, in the family circle, a little girl, while still in the nursery, stopped short while she was talking to swallow her saliva, her parents would say: "She takes after aunt Zélia," would feel that as she grew up, her upper lip would soon tend to hide itself beneath a faint moustache, and would make up their minds to cultivate her inherited talent for music. It was not long before the Cambremers were on less friendly terms with Mme. Verdurin than with myself, for different reasons. They felt, they must invite her to dine. The "young" Marquise said to me contemptuously: "I don't see why we shouldn't invite that woman, in the country one meets anybody, it needn't involve one in anything." But being at heart considerably impressed, they never ceased to consult me as to the way in which they should carry out their desire to be polite. I thought that as they had invited Albertine and myself to dine with some friends of Saint-Loup, smart people of the neighbourhood, who owned the château of Gourville, and represented a little more than the cream of Norman society, for which Mme. Verdurin, while pretending to ignore it, thirsted, I would advise the Cambremers to invite the Mistress to meet

them. But the lord and lady of Féterne, in their fear (so timorous were they) of offending their noble friends, or (so simple were they) that M. and Mme. Verdurin might be bored by people who were not intellectual, or yet again (since they were impregnated with a spirit of routine which experience had not fertilised) of mixing different kinds of people, and making a social blunder, declared that it would not be a success, and that it would be much better to keep Mme. Verdurin (whom they would invite with all her little group) for another evening. For this coming evening—the smart one, to meet Saint-Loup's friends—they invited nobody from the little nucleus but Morel, in order that M. de Charlus might indirectly be informed of the brilliant people whom they had in their house, and also that the musician might help them to entertain their guests, for he was to be asked to bring his violin. They threw in Cottard as well, because M. de Cambremer declared that he had "a go" about him, and would be a success at the dinner-table; besides, it might turn out useful to be on friendly terms with a doctor, if they should ever have anybody ill in the house. But they invited him by himself, so as not to "start any complications with the wife." Mme. Verdurin was furious when she heard that two members of the little group had been invited without herself to dine at Féterne "quite quietly." She dictated to the doctor, whose first impulse had been to accept, a stiff reply in which he said: "*We* are dining that evening with Mme. Verdurin," a plural which was to teach the Cambremers a lesson, and to shew them that he was not detachable from Mme. Cottard. As for Morel, Mme. Verdurin had no need to outline a course of impolite behaviour for him, he found one

of his own accord, for the following reason. If he preserved, with regard to M. de Charlus, in so far as his pleasures were concerned, an independence which distressed the Baron, we have seen that the latter's influence was making itself felt more and more in other regions, and that he had for instance enlarged the young virtuoso's knowledge of music and purified his style. But it was still, at this point in our story at least, only an influence. At the same time there was one subject upon which anything that M. de Charlus might say was blindly accepted and put into practice by Morel. Blindly and foolishly, for not only were M. de Charlus's instructions false, but, even had they been justifiable in the case of a great gentleman, when applied literally by Morel they became grotesque. The subject as to which Morel was becoming so credulous and obeyed his master with such docility was that of social distinction. The violinist, who, before making M. de Charlus's acquaintance, had had no conception of society, had taken literally the brief and arrogant sketch of it that the Baron had outlined for him: "There are a certain number of outstanding families," M. de Charlus had told him, "first and foremost the Guermantes, who claim fourteen alliances with the House of France, which is flattering to the House of France if anything, for it was to Aldonce de Guermantes and not to Louis the Fat, his consanguineous but younger brother, that the Throne of France should have passed. Under Louis XIV, we 'draped' at the death of Monsieur, as having the same grandmother as the king; a long way below the Guermantes, one may however mention the families of La Trémoïlle, descended from the Kings of Naples and the Counts of Poitiers; of d'Uzès, scarcely

old as a family, but the premier peers; of Luynes, who are of entirely recent origin, but have distinguished themselves by good marriages; of Choiseul, Harcourt, La Rochefoucauld. Add to these the family of Noailles (notwithstanding the Comte de Toulouse), Montesquiou and Castellane, and, I think I am right in saying, those are all. As for all the little people who call themselves Marquis de Cambremerde or de Vatefairefiche, there is no difference between them and the humblest private in your regiment. It doesn't matter whether you go and p— at Comtesse S—t's or s—t at Baronne P—'s, it's exactly the same, you will have compromised yourself and have used a dirty rag instead of toilet paper. Which is not nice." Morel had piously taken in this history lesson, which was perhaps a trifle cursory, and looked upon these matters as though he were himself a Guermantes and hoped that he might some day have an opportunity of meeting the false La Tour d'Auvergnes in order to let them see, by the contemptuous way in which he shook hands, that he did not take them very seriously. As for the Cambremers, here was his very chance to prove to them that they were no better than "the humblest private in his regiment." He did not answer their invitation, and on the evening of the dinner declined at the last moment by telegram, as pleased with himself as if he had behaved like a Prince of the Blood. It must be added here that it is impossible to imagine how intolerable and interfering M. de Charlus could be, in a more general fashion, and even, he who was so clever, how stupid, on all occasions when the flaws in his character came into play. We may say indeed that these flaws are like an intermittent malady of the mind. We have all observed cases of this among

women, and even among men, endowed with remarkable intelligence but afflicted with nerves; when they are happy, calm, satisfied with their surroundings, we cannot help admiring their precious gifts, the words that fall from their lips are the literal truth. A touch of headache, the slightest injury to their self-esteem is enough to alter everything. The luminous intelligence, become abrupt, convulsive and narrow, reflects nothing but an irritated, suspicious, teasing self, doing everything that it can to give trouble. The Cambremers were extremely angry; and in the interval other incidents brought about a certain tension in their relations with the little clan. As we were returning, the Cottards, Charlus, Brichot, Morel and I, from a dinner at la Raspelière, one evening after the Cambremers who had been to luncheon with friends at Harambouville had accompanied us for part of our outward journey: "You who are so fond of Balzac, and can find examples of him in the society of to-day," I had remarked to M. de Charlus, "you must feel that those Cambremers come straight out of the *Scènes de la Vie de Province.*" But M. de Charlus, for all the world as though he had been their friend, and I had offended him by my remark, at once cut me short: "You say that because the wife is superior to the husband," he informed me in a dry tone. "Oh, I wasn't suggesting that she was the *Muse du département,* or Mme. de Bargeton, although. . . ." M. de Charlus again interrupted me: "Say rather, Mme. de Mortsauf." The train stopped and Brichot got out. "Didn't you see us making signs to you? You are incorrigible." "What do you mean?" "Why, have you never noticed that Brichot is madly in love with Mme. de Cambremer?" I could see from the attitude of Cot-

tard and Charlie that there was not a shadow of doubt about this in the little nucleus. I felt that it shewed a trace of malice on their part. "What, you never noticed how distressed he became when you mentioned her," went on M. de Charlus, who liked to shew that he had experience of women, and used to speak of the sentiment which they inspire with a natural air and as though this were the sentiment which he himself habitually felt. But a certain equivocally paternal tone in addressing all young men—notwithstanding his exclusive affection for Morel—gave the lie to the views of a woman-loving man which he expressed. "Oh! These children," he said in a shrill, mincing, sing-song voice, "one has to teach them everything, they are as innocent as a newborn babe, they can't even tell when a man is in love with a woman. I wasn't such a chicken at your age," he added, for he liked to use the expressions of the underworld, perhaps because they appealed to him, perhaps so as not to appear, by avoiding them, to admit that he consorted with people whose current vocabulary they were. A few days later, I was obliged to yield to the force of evidence, and admit that Brichot was enamoured of the Marquise. Unfortunately he accepted several invitations to luncheon with her. Mme. Verdurin decided that it was time to put a stop to these proceedings. Quite apart from the importance of such an intervention to her policy in controlling the little nucleus, explanations of this sort and the dramas to which they gave rise caused her an ever increasing delight which idleness breeds just as much in the middle classes as in the aristocracy. It was a day of great emotion at la Raspelière when Mme. Verdurin was seen to disappear for a whole hour with Brichot,

whom (it was known) she proceeded to inform that Mme. de Cambremer was laughing at him, that he was the joke of her drawing-room, that he would end his days in disgrace, having forfeited his position in the teaching world. She went so far as to refer in touching terms to the laundress with whom he was living in Paris, and to their little girl. She won the day, Brichot ceased to go to Féterne, but his grief was such that for two days it was thought that he would lose his sight altogether, while in any case his malady increased at a bound and held the ground it had won. In the mean time, the Cambremers, who were furious with Morel, invited M. de Charlus on one occasion, deliberately, without him. Receiving no reply from the Baron, they began to fear that they had committed a blunder, and, deciding that malice made an evil counsellor, wrote, a little late in the day, to Morel, an ineptitude which made M. de Charlus smile, as it proved to him the extent of his power. "You shall answer for us both that I accept," he said to Morel. When the evening of the dinner came, the party assembled in the great drawing-room of Féterne. In reality, the Cambremers were giving this dinner for those fine flowers of fashion M. and Mme. Féré. But they were so much afraid of displeasing M. de Charlus, that although she had got to know the Férés through M. de Chevregny, Mme. de Cambremer went into a fever when, on the afternoon before the dinner, she saw him arrive to pay a call on them at Féterne. She made every imaginable excuse for sending him back to Beausoleil as quickly as possible, not so quickly, however, that he did not pass, in the courtyard, the Férés, who were as shocked to see him dismissed like this as he himself was ashamed. But,

whatever happened, the Cambremers wished to spare M. de Charlus the sight of M. de Chevregny, whom they judged to be provincial because of certain little points which are overlooked in the family circle and become important only in the presence of strangers, who are the last people in the world to notice them. But we do not like to display to them relatives who have remained at the stage which we ourselves have struggled to outgrow. As for M. and Mme. Féré, they were, in the highest sense of the words, what are called "really nice people." In the eyes of those who so defined them, no doubt the Guermantes, the Rohans and many others were also really nice people, but their name made it unnecessary to say so. As everybody was not aware of the exalted birth of Mme. Féré's mother, and the extraordinarily exclusive circle in which she and her husband moved, when you mentioned their name, you invariably added by way of explanation that they were "the very best sort." Did their obscure name prompt them to a sort of haughty reserve? However that may be, the fact remains that the Férés refused to know people on whom a La Trémoïlle would have called. It needed the position of queen of her particular stretch of coast, which the old Marquise de Cambremer held in the Manche, to make the Férés consent to come to one of her afternoons every year. The Cambremers had invited them to dinner and were counting largely on the effect that would be made on them by M. de Charlus. It was discreetly announced that he was to be one of the party. As it happened, Mme. Féré had never met him. Mme. de Cambremer, on learning this, felt a keen satisfaction, and the smile of the chemist who is about to bring into contact for the

first time two particularly important bodies hovered over her face. The door opened, and Mme. de Cambremer almost fainted when she saw Morel enter the room alone. Like a private secretary charged with apologies for his Minister, like a morganatic wife who expresses the Prince's regret that he is unwell (so Mme. de Clinchamp used to apologise for the Duc d'Aumale), Morel said in the airiest of tones: "The Baron can't come. He is not feeling very well, at least I think that is why, I haven't seen him this week," he added, these last words completing the despair of Mme. de Cambremer, who had told M. and Mme. Féré that Morel saw M. de Charlus at every hour of the day. The Cambremers pretended that the Baron's absence gave an additional attraction to their party and, without letting Morel hear them, said to their other guests: "We can do very well without him, can't we, it will be all the better." But they were furious, suspected a plot hatched by Mme. Verdurin, and, tit for tat, when she invited them again to la Raspelière, M. de Cambremer, unable to resist the pleasure of seeing his house again and of mingling with the little group, came, but came alone, saying that the Marquise was so sorry, but her doctor had ordered her to stay in her room. The Cambremers hoped by this partial attendance at once to teach M. de Charlus a lesson, and to shew the Verdurins that they were not obliged to treat them with more than a limited politeness, as Princesses of the Blood used in the old days to "shew out" Duchesses, but only to the middle of the second saloon. After a few weeks, they were scarcely on speaking terms. M. de Cambremer explained this to me as follows: "I must tell you that with M. de Charlus it was rather difficult. He is an extreme

Dreyfusard. . . ." "Oh, no!" "Yes. . . . Anyhow his cousin the Prince de Guermantes is, they've come in for a lot of abuse over that. I have some relatives who are very particular about that sort of thing. I can't afford to mix with those people, I should quarrel with the whole of my family." "Since the Prince de Guermantes is a Dreyfusard, that will make it all the easier," said Mme. de Cambremer, "for Saint-Loup, who is said to be going to marry his niece, is one too. Indeed, that is perhaps why he is marrying her." "Come now, my dear, you mustn't say that Saint-Loup, who is a great friend of ours, is a Dreyfusard. One ought not to make such allegations lightly," said M. de Cambremer. "You would make him highly popular in the army!" "He was once, but he isn't any longer," I explained to M. de Cambremer. "As for his marrying Mlle. de Guermantes-Ambresac, is there any truth in that?" "People are talking of nothing else, but you should be in a position to know." "But I repeat that he told me himself, he was a Dreyfusard," said Mme. de Cambremer. "Not that there isn't every excuse for him, the Guermantes are half German." "The Guermantes in the Rue de Varenne, you can say, are entirely German," said Cancan. "But Saint-Loup is a different matter altogether; he may have any amount of German blood, his father insisted upon maintaining his title as a great nobleman of France, he rejoined the service in 1871 and was killed in the war in the most gallant fashion. I may take rather a strong line about these matters, but it doesn't do to exaggerate either one way or the other. *In medio . . . virtus*, ah, I forget the exact words. It's a remark Doctor Cottard made. Now, there's a man who can always say the appropriate thing.

You ought to have a small Larousse in the house." To avoid having to give an opinion as to the Latin quotation, and to get away from the subject of Saint-Loup, as to whom her husband seemed to think that she was wanting in tact, Mme. de Cambremer fell back upon the Mistress whose quarrel with them was even more in need of an explanation. "We were delighted to let la Raspelière to Mme. Verdurin," said the Marquise. "The only trouble is, she appears to imagine that with the house, and everything else that she has managed to tack on to it, the use of the meadow, the old hangings, all sorts of things which weren't in the lease at all, she should also be entitled to make friends with us. The two things are entirely distinct. Our mistake lay in our not having done everything quite simply through a lawyer or an agency. At Féterne it doesn't much matter, but I can just imagine the face my aunt de Ch'nouville would make if she saw old mother Verdurin come marching in, on one of my days, with her hair streaming. As for M. de Charlus, of course, he knows some quite nice people, but he knows some very nasty people too." I asked for details. Driven into a corner, Mme. de Cambremer finally admitted: "People say that it was he who maintained a certain Monsieur Moreau, Morille, Morue, I don't remember. Nothing to do, of course, with Morel, the violinist," she added, blushing. "When I realised that Mme. Verdurin imagined that because she was our tenant in the Manche, she would have the right to come and call upon me in Paris, I saw that it was time to cut the cable."

Notwithstanding this quarrel with the Mistress, the Cambremers were on quite good terms with the faithful,

and would readily get into our carriage when they were travelling by the train. Just before we reached Douville, Albertine, taking out her mirror for the last time, would sometimes feel obliged to change her gloves, or to take off her hat for a moment, and, with the tortoiseshell comb which I had given her and which she wore in her hair, would smooth the plaits, pull out the puffs, and if necessary, over the undulations which descended in regular valleys to the nape of her neck, push up her chignon. Once we were in the carriages which had come to meet us, we no longer had any idea where we were; the roads were not lighted; we could tell by the louder sound of the wheels that we were passing through a village, we thought we had arrived, we found ourselves once more in the open country, we heard bells in the distance, we forgot that we were in evening dress, and had almost fallen asleep when, at the end of this wide borderland of darkness which, what with the distance we had travelled and the incidents characteristic of all railway journeys, seemed to have carried us on to a late hour of the night and almost half way back to Paris, suddenly after the crunching of the carriage wheels over a finer gravel had revealed to us that we had turned into the park, there burst forth, reintroducing us into a social existence, the dazzling lights of the drawing-room, then of the dining-room where we were suddenly taken aback by hearing eight o'clock strike, that hour which we supposed to have so long since passed, while the endless dishes and vintage wines followed one another round men in black and women with bare arms, at a dinner-party ablaze with light like any real dinner-party, surrounded only, and thereby changing its character, by the double veil, sombre and strange,

that was woven for it, with a sacrifice of their first solemnity to this social purpose, by the nocturnal, rural, seaside hours of the journey there and back. The latter indeed obliged us to leave the radiant and soon forgotten splendour of the lighted drawing-room for the carriages in which I arranged to sit beside Albertine so that my mistress might not be left with other people in my absence, and often for another reason as well, which was that we could both do many things in a dark carriage, in which the jolts of the downward drive would moreover give us an excuse, should a sudden ray of light fall upon us, for clinging to one another. When M. de Cambremer was still on visiting terms with the Verdurins, he would ask me: "You don't think that this fog will bring on your choking fits? My sister was terribly bad this morning. Ah! You have been having them too," he said with satisfaction. "I shall tell her that to-night. I know that, as soon as I get home, the first thing she will ask will be whether you have had any lately." He spoke to me of my sufferings only to lead up to his sister's, and made me describe mine in detail simply that he might point out the difference between them and hers. But notwithstanding these differences, as he felt that his sister's choking fits entitled him to speak with authority, he could not believe that what "succeeded" with hers was not indicated as a cure for mine, and it irritated him that I would not try these remedies, for if there is one thing more difficult than submitting oneself to a regime it is refraining from imposing it upon other people. "Not that I need speak, a mere outsider, when you are here before the areopagus, at the fountainhead of wisdom. What does Professor Cottard think about them?" I

saw his wife once again, as a matter of fact, because she had said that my "cousin" had odd habits, and I wished to know what she meant by that. She denied having said it, but finally admitted that she had been speaking of a person whom she thought she had seen with my cousin. She did not know the person's name and said faintly that, if she was not mistaken, it was the wife of a banker, who was called Lina, Linette, Lisette, Lia, anyhow something like that. I felt that "wife of a banker" was inserted merely to put me off the scent. I decided to ask Albertine whether this were true. But I preferred to speak to her with an air of knowledge rather than of curiosity. Besides Albertine would not have answered me at all, or would have answered me only with a "no" of which the "n" would have been too hesitating and the "o" too emphatic. Albertine never related facts that were capable of injuring her, but always other facts which could be explained only by them, the truth being rather a current which flows from what people say to us, and which we apprehend, invisible as it may be, than the actual thing that they say. And so when I assured her that a woman whom she had known at Vichy had a bad reputation, she swore to me that this woman was not at all what I supposed, and had never attempted to make her do anything improper. But she added, another day, when I was speaking of my curiosity as to people of that sort, that the Vichy lady had a friend, whom she, Albertine, did not know, but whom the lady had "*promised* to introduce to her." That she should have promised her this, could only mean that Albertine wished it, or that the lady had known that by offering the introduction she would be giving her pleasure. But

if I had pointed this out to Albertine, I should have appeared to be depending for my information upon her, I should have put her on her guard at once, I should never have learned anything more, I should have ceased to make myself feared. Besides, we were at Balbec, the Vichy lady and her friend lived at Menton; the remoteness, the impossibility of the danger made short work of my suspicions. Often when M. de Cambremer hailed me from the station I had been with Albertine making the most of the darkness, and with all the more difficulty as she had been inclined to resist, fearing that it was not dark enough. "You know, I'm sure Cottard saw us, anyhow, if he didn't, he must have noticed how breathless we were from our voices, just when they were talking about your other kind of breathlessness," Albertine said to me when we arrived at the Douville station where we were to take the little train home. But this homeward, like the outward journey, if, by giving me a certain poetical feeling, it awakened in me the desire to travel, to lead a new life, and so made me decide to abandon any intention of marrying Albertine, and even to break off our relations finally, also, and by the very fact of their contradictory nature, made this breach more easy. For, on the homeward journey just as much as on the other, at every station there joined us in the train or greeted us from the platform people whom we knew; the furtive pleasures of the imagination were outweighed by those other, continual pleasures of sociability which are so soothing, so soporific. Already, before the stations themselves, their names (which had suggested so many fancies to me since the day on which I first heard them, the evening on which I travelled down to Balbec with my grandmother), had

grown human, had lost their strangeness since the evening when Brichot, at Albertine's request, had given us a more complete account of their etymology. I had been charmed by the "flower" that ended certain names, such as Fiquefleur, Honfleur, Flers, Barfleur, Harfleur, etc., and amused by the "beef" that comes at the end of Bricquebœuf. But the flower vanished, and also the beef, when Brichot (and this he had told me on the first day in the train) informed us that *fleur* means a harbour (like *fiord*), and that *bœuf,* in Norman *budh,* means a hut. As he cited a number of examples, what had appeared to me a particular instance became general, Bricquebœuf took its place by the side of Elbeuf, and indeed in a name that was at first sight as individual as the place itself, like the name Pennedepie, in which the obscurities most impossible for the mind to elucidate seemed to me to have been amalgamated from time immemorial in a word as coarse, savoury and hard as a certain Norman cheese, I was disappointed to find the Gallic *pen* which means mountain and is as recognisable in Pennemarck as in the Apennines. As at each halt of the train I felt that we should have friendly hands to shake if not visitors to receive in our carriage, I said to Albertine: "Hurry up and ask Brichot about the names you want to know. You mentioned to me Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse." "Yes, I love that *orgueil,* it's a proud village," said Albertine. "You would find it," Brichot replied, "prouder still if, instead of turning it into French or even adopting a low Latinity, as we find in the Cartulary of the Bishop of Bayeux, *Marcouvilla superba,* you were to take the older form, more akin to the Norman, *Marculplinvilla superba,* the village, the domain of Mer-

culph. In almost all these names which end in *ville*, you might see still marshalled upon this coast, the phantoms of the rude Norman invaders. At Hermenonville, you had, standing by the carriage door, only our excellent Doctor, who, obviously, has nothing of the Nordic chief about him. But, by shutting your eyes, you might have seen the illustrious Herimund (*Herimundivilla*). Although I can never understand why people choose those roads, between Loigny and Balbec-Plage, rather than the very picturesque roads that lead from Loigny to old Balbec, Mme. Verdurin has perhaps taken you out that way in her carriage. If so, you have seen Incarville, or the village of Wiscar; and Tourville, before you come to Mme. Verdurin's, is the village of Turold. And besides, there were not only the Normans. It seems that the Germans (*Alemanni*) came as far as here: Aumenancourt, *Alemanicurtis*—don't let us speak of it to that young officer I see there; he would be capable of refusing to visit his cousins there any more. There were also Saxons, as is proved by the springs of Sissonne" (the goal of one of Mme. Verdurin's favourite excursions, and quite rightly), "just as in England you have Middlesex, Wessex. And what is inexplicable, it seems that the Goths, miserable wretches as they are said to have been, came as far as this, and even the Moors, for Mortagne comes from *Mauretania*. Their trace has remained at Gourville—*Gothorunvilla*. Some vestige of the Latins subsists also, Lagny (*Latiniacum*)." "What I should like to have is an explanation of Thorpehomme," said M. de Charlus. "I understand *homme*," he added, at which the sculptor and Cottard exchanged significant glances. "But *Thorpe?*" "*Homme* does not in the

least mean what you are naturally led to suppose, Baron," replied Brichot, glancing maliciously at Cottard and the sculptor. *Homme* has nothing to do, in this instance, with the sex to which I am not indebted for my mother. *Homme* is *holm* which means a small island, etc. . . . As for *Thorpe,* or village, we find that in a hundred words with which I have already bored our young friend. Thus in Thorpehomme there is not the name of a Norman chief, but words of the Norman language. You see how the whole of this country has been Germanised." "I think that is an exaggeration," said M. de Charlus. "Yesterday I was at Orgeville." "This time I give you back the man I took from you in Thorpehomme, Baron. Without wishing to be pedantic, a Charter of Robert I gives us, for Orgeville, *Otgervilla,* the domain of Otger. All these names are those of ancient lords. Octeville la Venelle is a corruption of l'Avenel. The Avenels were a family of repute in the middle ages. Bourguenolles, where Mme. Verdurin took us the other day, used to be written Bourg de Môles, for that village belonged in the eleventh century to Baudoin de Môles, as also did la Chaise-Baudoin, but here we are at Doncières." "Heavens, look at all these subalterns trying to get in," said M. de Charlus with feigned alarm. "I am thinking of you, for it doesn't affect me, I am getting out here." "You hear, Doctor?" said Brichot. "The Baron is afraid of officers passing over his body. And yet they have every right to appear here in their strength, for Doncières is precisely the same as Saint-Cyr, *Dominus Cyriacus.* There are plenty of names of towns in which *Sanctus* and *Sancta* are replaced by *Dominus* and *Domina.* Besides, this peaceful military town has sometimes a false

air of Saint-Cyr, of Versailles, and even of Fontainebleau."

During these homeward (as on the outward) journeys I used to tell Albertine to put on her things, for I knew very well that at Aumenancourt, Doncières, Epreville, Saint-Vast we should be receiving brief visits from friends. Nor did I at all object to these, when they took the form of (at Hermenonville—the domain of Herimund) a visit from M. de Chevregny, seizing the opportunity, when he had come down to meet other guests, of asking me to come over to luncheon next day at Beausoleil, or (at Doncières) the sudden irruption of one of Saint-Loup's charming friends sent by him (if he himself was not free) to convey to me an invitation from Captain de Borodino, from the officers' mess at the Cocq-Hardi, or the serjeants' at the Faisan Doré. If Saint-Loup often came in person, then, during the whole of the time that he was with us, I contrived, without attracting attention, to keep Albertine a prisoner under my own watch and ward, not that my vigilance was of any use. On one occasion however my watch was interrupted. When there was a long stop, Bloch, after greeting us, was making off at once to join his father, who, having just succeeded to his uncle's fortune, and having leased a country house by the name of La Commanderie, thought it befitting a country gentleman always to go about in a post chaise, with postilions in livery. Bloch begged me to accompany him to the carriage. "But make haste, for these quadrupeds are impatient, come, O man beloved of the gods, thou wilt give pleasure to my father." But I could not bear to leave Albertine in the train with Saint-Loup; they might, while my back was turned, get into

conversation, go into another compartment, smile at one another, touch one another; my eyes, glued to Albertine, could not detach themselves from her so long as Saint-Loup was there. Now I could see quite well that Bloch, who had asked me, as a favour, to go and say how d'ye do to his father, in the first place thought it not very polite of me to refuse when there was nothing to prevent me from doing so, the porters having told us that the train would remain for at least a quarter of an hour in the station, and almost all the passengers, without whom it would not start, having alighted; and, what was more, had not the least doubt that it was because quite decidedly—my conduct on this occasion furnished him with a definite proof of it—I was a snob. For he was well aware of the names of the people in whose company I was. In fact M. de Charlus had said to me, some time before this and without remembering or caring that the introduction had been made long ago: "But you must introduce your friend to me, you are shewing a want of respect for myself," and had talked to Bloch, who had seemed to please him immensely, so much so that he had gratified him with an: "I hope to meet you again." "Then it is irrevocable, you won't walk a hundred yards to say how d'ye do to my father, who would be so pleased," Bloch said to me. I was sorry to appear to be wanting in good fellowship, and even more so for the reason for which Bloch supposed that I was wanting, and to feel that he imagined that I was not the same towards my middle class friends when I was with people of "birth." From that day he ceased to shew me the same friendly spirit and, what pained me more, had no longer the same regard for my character. But, in order

to undeceive him as to the motive which made me remain in the carriage, I should have had to tell him something —to wit, that I was jealous of Albertine—which would have distressed me even more than letting him suppose that I was stupidly worldly. So it is that in theory we find that we ought always to explain ourselves frankly, to avoid misunderstandings. But very often life arranges these in such a way that, in order to dispel them, in the rare circumstances in which it might be possible to do so, we must reveal either—which was not the case here—something that would annoy our friend even more than the injustice that he imputes to us, or a secret the disclosure of which—and this was my predicament—appears to us even worse than the misunderstanding. Besides, even without my explaining to Bloch, since I could not, my reason for not going with him, if I had begged him not to be angry with me, I should only have increased his anger by shewing him that I had observed it. There was nothing to be done but to bow before the decree of fate which had willed that Albertine's presence should prevent me from accompanying him, and that he should suppose that it was on the contrary the presence of people of distinction, the only effect of which, had they been a hundred times more distinguished, would have been to make me devote my attention exclusively to Bloch and reserve all my civility for him. It is sufficient that accidentally, absurdly, an incident (in this case the juxtaposition of Albertine and Saint-Loup) be interposed between two destinies whose lines have been converging towards one another, for them to deviate, stretch farther and farther apart, and never converge again. And there are friendships more precious than Bloch's for myself

which have been destroyed without the involuntary author of the offence having any opportunity to explain to the offended party what would no doubt have healed the injury to his self-esteem and called back his fugitive affection.

Friendships more precious than Bloch's is not, for that matter, saying very much. He had all the faults that most annoyed me. It so happened that my affection for Albertine made them altogether intolerable. Thus in that brief moment in which I was talking to him, while keeping my eye on Robert, Bloch told me that he had been to luncheon with Mme. Bontemps and that everybody had spoken about me with the warmest praise until the "decline of Helios." "Good," thought I, "as Mme. Bontemps regards Bloch as a genius, the enthusiastic support that he must have given me will do more than anything that the others can have said, it will come round to Albertine. Any day now she is bound to learn, and I am surprised that her aunt has not repeated it to her already, that I am a 'superior person.'" "Yes," Bloch went on, "everybody sang your praises. I alone preserved a silence as profound as though I had absorbed, in place of the repast (poor, as it happened) that was set before us, poppies, dear to the blessed brother of Thanatos and Lethe, the divine Hypnos, who enwraps in pleasant bonds the body and the tongue. It is not that I admire you less than the band of ravening dogs with whom I had been bidden to feed. But I admire you because I understand you, and they admire you without understanding you. To tell the truth, I admire you too much to speak of you thus in public, it would have seemed to me a profanation to praise aloud what I carry

in the profoundest depths of my heart. In vain might they question me about you, a sacred Pudor, daughter of Kronion, made me remain mute." I had not the bad taste to appear annoyed, but this Pudor seemed to me akin—far more than to Kronion—to the modesty that prevents a critic who admires you from speaking of you because the secret temple in which you sit enthroned would be invaded by the mob of ignorant readers and journalists—to the modesty of the statesman who does not recommend you for a decoration because you would be lost in a crowd of people who are not your equals, to the modesty of the academician who refrains from voting for you in order to spare you the shame of being the colleague of X—— who is devoid of talent, to the modesty in short, more respectable and at the same time more criminal, of the sons who implore us not to write about their dead father who abounded in merit, so that we shall not prolong his life and create a halo of glory round the poor deceased who would prefer that his name should be borne upon the lips of men to the wreaths, albeit laid there by pious hands, upon his tomb.

If Bloch, while he distressed me by his inability to understand the reason that prevented me from going to speak to his father, had exasperated me by confessing that he had depreciated me at Mme. Bontemps's (I now understood why Albertine had never made any allusion to this luncheon-party and remained silent when I spoke to her of Bloch's affection for myself), the young Israelite had produced upon M. de Charlus an impression that was quite the opposite of annoyance.

Certainly Bloch now believed not only that I was unable to remain for a second out of the company of smart

people, but that, jealous of the advances that they might make to him (M. de Charlus, for instance), I was trying to put a spoke in his wheel and to prevent him from making friends with them; but for his part the Baron regretted that he had not seen more of my friend. As was his habit, he took care not to betray this feeling. He began by asking me various questions about Bloch, but in so casual a tone, with an interest that seemed so assumed, that one would have thought he did not hear the answers. With an air of detachment, an intonation that expressed not merely indifference but complete distraction, and as though simply out of politeness to myself: "He looks intelligent, he said he wrote, has he any talent?" I told M. de Charlus that it had been very kind of him to say that he hoped to see Bloch again. The Baron made not the slightest sign of having heard my remark, and as I repeated it four times without eliciting a reply, I began to wonder whether I had not been the dupe of an acoustic mirage when I thought I heard M. de Charlus utter those words. "He lives at Balbec?" intoned the Baron, with an air so far from questioning that it is a nuisance that the written language does not possess a sign other than the mark of interrogation with which to end these speeches that are apparently so little interrogative. It is true that such a sign would scarcely serve for M. de Charlus. "No, they have taken a place near here, La Commanderie." Having learned what he wished to know, M. de Charlus pretended to feel a contempt for Bloch. "How appalling," he exclaimed, his voice resuming all its clarion strength. "All the places or properties called La Commanderie were built or owned by the Knights of the Order of Malta (of whom I am

one), as the places called Temple or Cavalerie were by the Templars. That I should live at La Commanderie would be the most natural thing in the world. But a Jew! However, I am not surprised; it comes from a curious instinct for sacrilege, peculiar to that race. As soon as a Jew has enough money to buy a place in the country he always chooses one that is called Priory, Abbey, Minster, Chantry. I had some business once with a Jewish official, guess where he lived: at Pont-l'Evêque. When he came to grief, he had himself transferred to Brittany, to Pont-l'Abbé. When they perform in Holy Week those indecent spectacles that are called "the Passion," half the audience are Jews, exulting in the thought that they are going to hang Christ a second time on the Cross, at least in effigy. At one of the Lamoureux concerts, I had a wealthy Jewish banker sitting next to me. They played the *Boyhood of Christ* by Berlioz, he was quite shocked. But he soon recovered his habitually blissful expression when he heard the Good Friday music. So your friend lives at the Commanderie, the wretch! What sadism! You shall shew me the way to it," he went on, resuming his air of indifference, "so that I may go there one day and see how our former domains endure such a profanation. It is unfortunate, for he has good manners, he seems to have been well brought up. The next thing I shall hear will be that his address in Paris is Rue du Temple!" M. de Charlus gave the impression, by these words, that he was seeking merely to find a fresh example in support of his theory; as a matter of fact he was aiming at two birds with one stone, his principal object being to find out Bloch's address. "You are quite right," put in Brichot, "the Rue du Temple used to be

called Rue de la Chevalerie-du-Temple. And in that connexion will you allow me to make a remark, Baron?" said the don. "What? What is it?" said M. de Charlus tartly, the proffered remark preventing him from obtaining his information. "No, it's nothing," replied Brichot in alarm. "It is with regard to the etymology of Balbec, about which they were asking me. The Rue du Temple was formerly known as the Rue Barre-du-Bac, because the Abbey of Bac in Normandy had its Bar of Justice there in Paris." M. de Charlus made no reply and looked as if he had not heard, which was one of his favourite forms of insolence. "Where does your friend live, in Paris? As three streets out of four take their name from a church or an abbey, there seems every chance of further sacrilege there. One can't prevent Jews from living in the Boulevard de la Madeleine, Faubourg Saint-Honoré or Place Saint-Augustin. So long as they do not carry their perfidy a stage farther, and pitch their tents in the Place du Parvis Notre-Dame, Quai de l'Archevêché, Rue Chanoinesse or Rue de l'Avemaria, we must make allowance for their difficulties." We could not enlighten M. de Charlus, not being aware of Bloch's address at the time. But I knew that his father's office was in the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. "Oh! Is not that the last word in perversity?" exclaimed M. de Charlus, who appeared to find a profound satisfaction in his own cry of ironical indignation. "Rue des Blancs-Manteaux!" he repeated, dwelling with emphasis upon each syllable and laughing as he spoke. "What sacrilege! Imagine that these White Mantles polluted by M. Bloch were those of the mendicant brethren, styled Serfs of the Blessed Virgin, whom Saint Louis established there. And

the street has always housed some religious Order. The profanation is all the more diabolical since within a stone's-throw of the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux there is a street whose name escapes me, which is entirely conceded to the Jews, there are Hebrew characters over the shops, bakeries for unleavened bread, kosher butcheries, it is positively the Judengasse of Paris. That is where M. Bloch ought to reside. Of course," he went on in an emphatic, arrogant tone, suited to the discussion of aesthetic matters, and giving, by an unconscious strain of heredity, the air of an old musketeer of Louis XIII to his backward tilted face, "I take an interest in all that sort of thing only from the point of view of art. Politics are not in my line, and I cannot condemn wholesale, because Bloch belongs to it, a nation that numbers Spinoza among its illustrious sons. And I admire Rembrandt too much not to realise the beauty that can be derived from frequenting the synagogue. But after all a ghetto is all the finer, the more homogeneous and complete it is. You may be sure, moreover, so far are business instincts and avarice mingled in that race with sadism, that the proximity of the Hebraic street of which I was telling you, the convenience of having close at hand the fleshpots of Israel will have made your friend choose the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. How curious it all is! It was there, by the way, that there lived a strange Jew who used to boil the Host, after which I think they boiled him, which is stranger still, since it seems to suggest that the body of a Jew can be equivalent to the Body of Our Lord. Perhaps it might be possible to arrange with your friend to take us to see the church of the White Mantles. Just think that it was there that they laid the body of Louis

d'Orléans after his assassination by Jean sans Peur, which unfortunately did not rid us of the Orléans. Personally, I have always been on the best of terms with my cousin the Duc de Chartres; still, after all, they are a race of usurpers who caused the assassination of Louis XVI and dethroned Charles X and Henri V. One can see where they get that from, when their ancestors include Monsieur, who was so styled doubtless because he was the most astounding old woman, and the Regent and the rest of them. What a family!" This speech, anti-Jew or pro-Hebrew—according as one regards the outward meaning of its phrases or the intentions that they concealed—had been comically interrupted for me by a remark which Morel whispered to me, to the fury of M. de Charlus. Morel, who had not failed to notice the impression that Bloch had made, murmured his thanks in my ear for having "given him the push," adding cynically: "He wanted to stay, it's all jealousy, he would like to take my place. Just like a yid!" "We might have taken advantage of this halt, which still continues, to ask your friend for some explanations of his ritual. Couldn't you fetch him back?" M. de Charlus asked me, with the anxiety of uncertainty. "No, it's impossible, he has gone away in a carriage, and besides, he is vexed with me." "Thank you, thank you," Morel breathed. "Your excuse is preposterous, one can always overtake a carriage, there is nothing to prevent your taking a motor-car," replied M. de Charlus, in the tone of a man accustomed to see everyone yield before him. But, observing my silence: "What is this more or less imaginary carriage?" he said to me insolently, and with a last ray of hope. "It is an open post chaise which must by this time have

reached la Commanderie." Before the impossible, M. de Charlus resigned himself and made a show of jocularity. "I can understand their recoiling from the idea of a new brougham. It might have swept them clean." At last we were warned that the train was about to start, and Saint-Loup left us. But this was the only day when by getting into our carriage he, unconsciously, caused me pain, when I thought for a moment of leaving him with Albertine in order to go with Bloch. The other times his presence did not torment me. For of her own accord Albertine, to save me from any uneasiness, would upon some pretext or other place herself in such a position that she could not even unintentionally brush against Robert, almost too far away to have to hold out her hand to him, and turning her eyes away from him would plunge, as soon as he appeared, into ostentatious and almost affected conversation with any of the other passengers, continuing this make-believe until Saint-Loup had gone. So that the visits which he paid us at Doncières, causing me no pain, no inconvenience even, were in no way discordant from the rest, all of which I found pleasing because they brought me so to speak the homage and invitation of this land. Already, as the summer drew to a close, on our journey from Balbec to Douville, when I saw in the distance the watering-place at Saint-Pierre des Ifs where, for a moment in the evening, the crest of the cliffs glittered rosy pink as the snow upon a mountain glows at sunset, it no longer recalled to my mind, I do not say the melancholy which the sight of its strange, sudden elevation had aroused in me on the first evening, when it filled me with such a longing to take the train back to Paris instead of going on to Balbec, but the spectacle that in

the morning, Elstir had told me, might be enjoyed from there, at the hour before sunrise, when all the colours of the rainbow are refracted from the rocks, and when he had so often wakened the little boy who had served him, one year, as model, to paint him, nude, upon the sands. The name Saint-Pierre des Ifs announced to me merely that there would presently appear a strange, intelligent, painted man of fifty with whom I should be able to talk about Chateaubriand and Balzac. And now in the mists of evening, behind that cliff of Incarville, which had filled my mind with so many dreams in the past, what I saw, as though its old sandstone wall had become transparent, was the comfortable house of an uncle of M. de Cambremer in which I knew that I should always find a warm welcome if I did not wish to dine at la Raspelière or to return to Balbec. So that it was not merely the place-names of this district that had lost their initial mystery, but the places themselves. The names, already half-stripped of a mystery which etymology had replaced by reason, had now come down a stage farther still. On our homeward journeys, at Hermenonville, at Incarville, at Harambouville, as the train came to a standstill, we could make out shadowy forms which we did not at first identify, and which Brichot, who could see nothing at all, might perhaps have mistaken in the darkness for the phantoms of Herimund, Wiscar and Herimbald. But they came up to our carriage. It was merely M. de Cambremer, now completely out of touch with the Verdurins, who had come to see off his own guests and, as ambassador for his wife and mother, came to ask me whether I would not let him "carry me off" to keep me for a few days at Féterne where I should find successively a lady

of great musical talent, who would sing me the whole of Gluck, and a famous chess-player, with whom I could have some splendid games, which would not interfere with the fishing expeditions and yachting trips on the bay, nor even with the Verdurin dinner-parties, for which the Marquis gave me his word of honour that he would "lend" me, sending me there and fetching me back again, for my greater convenience and also to make sure of my returning. "But I cannot believe that it is good for you to go so high up. I know my sister could never stand it. She would come back in a fine state! She is not at all well just now. Indeed, you have been as bad as that! To-morrow you won't be able to stand up!" And he shook with laughter, not from malevolence but for the same reason which made him laugh whenever he saw a lame man hobbling along the street, or had to talk to a deaf person. "And before this? What, you haven't had an attack for a fortnight. Do you know, that is simply marvellous. Really, you ought to come and stay at Féterne, you could talk about your attacks to my sister." At Incarville it was the Marquis de Montpeyroux who, not having been able to go to Féterne, for he had been away shooting, had come "to meet the train" in top boots, with a pheasant's feather in his hat, to shake hands with the departing guests and at the same time with myself, bidding me expect, on the day of the week that would be most convenient to me, a visit from his son, whom he thanked me for inviting, adding that he would be very glad if I would make the boy read a little; or else M. de Crécy, come out to digest his dinner, he explained, smoking his pipe, accepting a cigar or indeed more than one, and saying to me: "Well, you haven't

named a day for our next Lucullus evening? We have nothing to discuss? Allow me to remind you that we left unsettled the question of the two families of Montgomery. We really must settle it. I am relying upon you." Others had come simply to buy newspapers. And many others came and chatted with us who, I have often suspected, were to be found upon the platform of the station nearest to their little mansion simply because they had nothing better to do than to converse for a moment with people of their acquaintance. A scene of social existence like any other, in fact, these halts on the little railway. The train itself appeared conscious of the part that had devolved upon it, had contracted a sort of human kindliness; patient, of a docile nature, it waited as long as they pleased for the stragglers, and even after it had started would stop to pick up those who signalled to it; they would then run after it panting, in which they resembled itself, but differed from it in that they were running to overtake it at full speed whereas it employed only a wise slowness. And so Hermenonville, Harambouville, Incarville no longer suggested to me even the rugged grandeurs of the Norman Conquest, not content with having entirely rid themselves of the unaccountable melancholy in which I had seen them steeped long ago in the moist evening air. Doncières! To me, even after I had come to know it and had awakened from my dream, how much had long survived in that name of pleasantly glacial streets, lighted windows, succulent flesh of birds. Doncières! Now it was nothing more than the station at which Morel joined the train, Egleville (*Aquilae villa*) that at which we generally found waiting for us Princess Sherbatoff, Maineville, the station at which Albertine left the train

on fine evenings, when, if she was not too tired, she felt inclined to enjoy a moment more of my company, having, if she took a footpath, little if any farther to walk than if she had alighted at Parville (*Paterni villa*). Not only did I no longer feel the anxious dread of isolation which had gripped my heart the first evening, I had no longer any need to fear its reawakening, nor to feel myself a stranger or alone in this land productive not only of chestnut trees and tamarisks, but of friendships which from beginning to end of the journey formed a long chain, interrupted like that of the blue hills, hidden here and there in the anfractuosity of the rock or behind the lime trees of the avenue, but delegating at each stage an amiable gentleman who came to interrupt my course with a cordial handclasp, to prevent me from feeling it too long, to offer if need be to continue the journey with me. Another would be at the next station, so that the whistle of the little tram parted us from one friend only to enable us to meet others. Between the most isolated properties and the railway which skirted them almost at the pace of a person who is walking fast, the distance was so slight that at the moment when, from the platform, outside the waiting-room, their owners hailed us, we might almost have imagined that they were doing so from their own doorstep, from their bedroom window, as though the little departmental line had been merely a street in a country town and the isolated mansion-house the town residence of a family; and even at the few stations where no "good evening" sounded, the silence had a nourishing and calming fulness, because I knew that it was formed from the slumber of friends who had gone to bed early in the neighbouring manor, where my arrival would have

been greeted with joy if I had been obliged to arouse them to ask for some hospitable office. Not to mention that a sense of familiarity so fills up our time that we have not, after a few months, a free moment in a town where on our first arrival the day offered us the absolute disposal of all its twelve hours, if one of these had by any chance fallen vacant, it would no longer have occurred to me to devote it to visiting some church for the sake of which I had come to Balbec in the past, nor even to compare a scene painted by Elstir with the sketch that I had seen of it in his studio, but rather to go and play one more game of chess at M. Féré's. It was indeed the degrading influence, as it was also the charm that this country round Balbec had had, that it should become for me in the true sense a friendly country; if its territorial distribution, its sowing, along the whole extent of the coast, with different forms of cultivation, gave of necessity to the visits which I paid to these different friends the form of a journey, they also reduced that journey to nothing more than the social amusement of a series of visits. The same place-names, so disturbing to me in the past that the mere Country House Year Book, when I turned over the chapter devoted to the Department of the Manche, caused me as keen an emotion as the railway time-table, had become so familiar to me that, in the time-table itself, I could have consulted the page headed: *Balbec to Douville via Doncières,* with the same happy tranquility as a directory of addresses. In this too social valley, along the sides of which I felt assembled, whether visible or not, a numerous company of friends, the poetical cry of the evening was no longer that of the owl or frog, but the "How goes it?" of M. de Criquetot or the

"*Χαῖρε*" of Brichot. Its atmosphere no longer aroused any anguish, and, charged with effluvia that were purely human, was easily breathable, indeed unduly soothing. The benefit that I did at least derive from it was that of looking at things only from a practical point of view. The idea of marrying Albertine appeared to me to be madness.

CHAPTER IV

Sudden revulsion in favour of Albertine. Agony at sunrise. I set off at once with Albertine for Paris.

I WAS only waiting for an opportunity for a final rupture. And, one evening, as Mamma was starting next day for Combray, where she was to attend the death-bed of one of her mother's sisters, leaving me behind so that I might get the benefit, as my grandmother would have wished, of the sea air, I had announced to her that I had irrevocably decided not to marry Albertine and would very soon stop seeing her. I was glad to have been able, by these words, to give some satisfaction to my mother on the eve of her departure. She had not concealed from me that this satisfaction was indeed extreme. I had also to come to an understanding with Albertine. As I was on my way back with her from la Raspelière, the faithful having alighted, some at Saint-Mars le Vêtu, others at Saint-Pierre des Ifs, others again at Doncières, feeling particularly happy and detached from her, I had decided, now that there were only our two selves in the carriage, to embark at length upon this subject. The truth, as a matter of fact, is that the girl of the Balbec company whom I really loved, albeit she was absent at that moment, as were the rest of her friends, but who was coming back there (I enjoyed myself with them all, because each of them had for me, as on the day when I first saw them, something of the essential quality of all the rest, as though they belonged to a race apart), was Andrée. Since she was coming back again, in a few days' time, to Balbec, it was certain that she would at once pay me a visit, and

then, to be left free not to marry her if I did not wish to do so, to be able to go to Venice, but at the same time to have her, while she was at Balbec, entirely to myself, the plan that I would adopt would be that of not seeming at all eager to come to her, and as soon as she arrived, when we were talking together, I would say to her: "What a pity it is that I didn't see you a few weeks earlier. I should have fallen in love with you; now my heart is bespoke. But that makes no difference, we shall see one another frequently, for I am unhappy about my other love, and you will help to console me." I smiled inwardly as I thought of this conversation, by this strategem I should be giving Andrée the impression that I was not really in love with her; and so she would not grow tired of me and I should take a joyful and pleasant advantage of her affection. But all this only made it all the more necessary that I should at length speak seriously to Albertine, so as not to behave indelicately, and, since I had decided to consecrate myself to her friend, she herself must be given clearly to understand that I was not in love with her. I must tell her so at once, as Andrée might arrive any day. But as we were getting near Parville, I felt that we should not have time that evening and that it was better to put off until the morrow what was now irrevocably settled. I confined myself, therefore, to discussing with her our dinner that evening at the Verdurins'. As she put on her cloak, the train having just left Incarville, the last station before Parville, she said to me: "To-morrow then, more Verdurin, you won't forget that you are coming to call for me." I could not help answering rather sharply: "Yes, that is if I don't 'fail' them, for I am beginning to find this sort of life really

stupid. In any case, if we go there, so that my time at la Raspelière may not be absolutely wasted, I must remember to ask Mme. Verdurin about something that may prove of great interest to myself, provide me with a subject for study, and give me pleasure as well, for I have really had very little this year at Balbec." "You are not very polite to me, but I forgive you, because I can see that your nerves are bad. What is this pleasure?" "That Mme. Verdurin should let me hear some things by a musician whose work she knows very well. I know one of his things myself, but it seems there are others and I should like to know if the rest of his work is printed, if it is different from what I know." "What musician?" "My dear child, when I have told you that his name is Vinteuil, will you be any the wiser?" We may have revolved every possible idea in our minds, and yet the truth has never occurred to us, and it is from without, when we are least expecting it, that it gives us its cruel stab and wounds us for all time. "You can't think how you amuse me," replied Albertine as she rose, for the train was slowing down. "Not only does it mean a great deal more to me than you suppose, but even without Mme. Verdurin I can get you all the information that you require. You remember my telling you about a friend older than myself, who has been a mother, a sister to me, with whom I spent the happiest years of my life at Trieste, and whom for that matter I am expecting to join in a few weeks at Cherbourg, when we shall start on our travels together (it sounds a little odd, but you know how I love the sea), very well, this friend (oh! not at all the type of woman you might suppose!), isn't this extraordinary, she is the dearest and most intimate friend of your

Vinteuil's daughter, and I know Vinteuil's daughter almost as well as I know her. I always call them my two big sisters. I am not sorry to let you see that your little Albertine can be of use to you in this question of music, about which you say, and quite rightly for that matter, that I know nothing at all." At the sound of these words, uttered as we were entering the station of Parville, so far from Combray and Montjouvain, so long after the death of Vinteuil, an image stirred in my heart, an image which I had kept in reserve for so many years that even if I had been able to guess, when I stored it up, long ago, that it had a noxious power, I should have supposed that in the course of time it had entirely lost it; preserved alive in the depths of my being—like Orestes whose death the gods had prevented in order that, on the appointed day, he might return to his native land to punish the murderer of Agamemnon—as a punishment, as a retribution (who can tell?) for my having allowed my grandmother to die, perhaps; rising up suddenly from the black night in which it seemed for ever buried, and striking, like an Avenger, in order to inaugurate for me a novel, terrible and merited existence, perhaps also to make dazzlingly clear to my eyes the fatal consequences which evil actions indefinitely engender, not only for those who have committed them, but for those who have done no more, have thought that they were doing no more than look on at a curious and entertaining spectacle, like myself, alas, on that afternoon long ago at Montjouvain, concealed behind a bush where (as when I complacently listened to an account of Swann's love affairs), I had perilously allowed to expand within myself the fatal road, destined to cause me suffering, of Knowledge. And at the same time, from my

bitterest grief I derived a sentiment almost of pride, almost joyful, that of a man whom the shock he has just received has carried at a bound to a point to which no voluntary effort could have brought him. Albertine the friend of Mlle. Vinteuil and of her friend, a practising and professional Sapphist, was, compared to what I had imagined when I doubted her most, as are, compared to the little acousticon of the 1889 Exhibition with which one barely hoped to be able to transmit sound from end to end of a house, the telephones that soar over streets, cities, fields, seas, uniting one country to another. It was a terrible terra incognita this on which I had just landed, a fresh phase of undreamed-of sufferings that was opening before me. And yet this deluge of reality that engulfs us, if it is enormous compared with our timid and microscopic suppositions, was anticipated by them. It was doubtless something akin to what I had just learned, something akin to Albertine's friendship with Mlle. Vinteuil, something which my mind would never have been capable of inventing, but which I obscurely apprehended when I became uneasy at the sight of Albertine and Andrée together. It is often simply from want of the creative spirit that we do not go to the full extent of suffering. And the most terrible reality brings us, with our suffering, the joy of a great discovery, because it merely gives a new and clear form to what we have long been ruminating without suspecting it. The train had stopped at Parville, and, as we were the only passengers in it, it was in a voice lowered by a sense of the futility of his task, by the force of habit which nevertheless made him perform it, and inspired in him simultaneously exactitude and indolence, and even more by a longing for

sleep, that the porter shouted: "Parville!" Albertine, who stood facing me, seeing that she had arrived at her destination stepped across the compartment in which we were and opened the door. But this movement which she was making to alight tore my heart unendurably, just as if, notwithstanding the position independent of my body which Albertine's body seemed to be occupying a yard away from it, this separation in space, which an accurate draughtsman would have been obliged to indicate between us, was only apparent, and anyone who wished to make a fresh drawing of things as they really were would now have had to place Albertine, not at a certain distance from me, but inside me. She distressed me so much by her withdrawal that, reaching after her, I caught her desperately by the arm. "Would it be materially impossible," I asked her, "for you to come and spend the night at Balbec?" "Materially, no. But I'm dropping with sleep." "You would be doing me an immense service. . . ." "Very well, then, though I don't in the least understand; why didn't you tell me sooner? I'll come, though." My mother was asleep when, after engaging a room for Albertine on a different floor, I entered my own. I sat down by the window, suppressing my sobs, so that my mother, who was separated from me only by a thin partition, might not hear me. I had not even remembered to close the shutters, for at one moment, raising my eyes, I saw facing me in the sky that same faint glow as of a dying fire which one saw in the restaurant at Rivebelle in a study that Elstir had made of a sunset effect. I remembered how thrilled I had been when I had seen from the railway on the day of my first arrival at Balbec, this same image of an evening which

preceded not the night but a new day. But no day now would be new to me any more, would arouse in me the desire for an unknown happiness; it would only prolong my sufferings, until the point when I should no longer have the strength to endure them. The truth of what Cottard had said to me in the casino at Parville was now confirmed beyond a shadow of doubt. What I had long dreaded, vaguely suspected of Albertine, what my instinct deduced from her whole personality and my reason controlled by my desire had gradually made me deny, was true! Behind Albertine I no longer saw the blue mountains of the sea, but the room at Montjouvain where she was falling into the arms of Mlle. Vinteuil with that laugh in which she gave utterance to the strange sound of her enjoyment. For, with a girl as pretty as Albertine, was it possible that Mlle. Vinteuil, having the desires she had, had not asked her to gratify them? And the proof that Albertine had not been shocked by the request but had consented, was that they had not quarrelled, indeed their intimacy had steadily increased. And that graceful movement with which Albertine laid her chin upon Rosemonde's shoulder, gazed at her smilingly, and deposited a kiss upon her throat, that movement which had reminded me of Mlle. Vinteuil, in interpreting which I had nevertheless hesitated to admit that an identical line traced by a gesture must of necessity be due to an identical inclination, for all that I knew, Albertine might simply have learned it from Mlle. Vinteuil. Gradually, the lifeless sky took fire. I who until then had never awakened without a smile at the humblest things, the bowl of coffee and milk, the sound of the rain, the thunder of the wind, felt that the day which in a moment was to

dawn, and all the days to come would never bring me any more the hope of an unknown happiness, but only the prolongation of my martyrdom. I clung still to life; I knew that I had nothing now that was not cruel to expect from it. I ran to the lift, regardless of the hour, to ring for the lift-boy who acted as night watchman, and asked him to go to Albertine's room, and to tell her that I had something of importance to say to her, if she could see me there. "Mademoiselle says she would rather come to you," was his answer. "She will be here in a moment." And presently, sure enough, in came Albertine in her dressing-gown. "Albertine," I said to her in a whisper, warning her not to raise her voice so as not to arouse my mother, from whom we were separated only by that partition whose thinness, to-day a nuisance, because it confined us to whispers, resembled in the past, when it so clearly expressed my grandmother's intentions, a sort of musical transparency, "I am ashamed to have disturbed you. Listen. To make you understand, I must tell you something which you do not know. When I came here, I left a woman whom I ought to have married, who was ready to sacrifice everything for me. She was to start on a journey this morning, and every day for the last week I have been wondering whether I should have the courage not to telegraph to her that I was coming back. I have had that courage, but it made me so wretched that I thought I would kill myself. That is why I asked you last night if you could not come and sleep at Balbec. If I had to die, I should have liked to bid you farewell." And I gave free vent to the tears which my fiction rendered natural. "My poor boy, if I had only known, I should have spent the night beside

you," cried Albertine, to whom the idea that I might perhaps marry this woman, and that her own chance of making a "good marriage" was thus vanishing, never even occurred, so sincerely was she moved by a grief the cause of which I was able to conceal from her, but not its reality and strength. "Besides," she told me, "last night, all the time we were coming from la Raspelière, I could see that you were nervous and unhappy, I was afraid there must be something wrong." As a matter of fact my grief had begun only at Parville, and my nervous trouble, which was very different but which fortunately Albertine identified with it, arose from the boredom of having to spend a few more days in her company. She added: "I shan't leave you any more, I am going to spend all my time here." She was offering me, in fact—and she alone could offer me—the sole remedy for the poison that was burning me, a remedy akin, as it happened, to the poison, for, though one was sweet, the other bitter, both were alike derived from Albertine. At that moment, Albertine—my malady—ceasing to cause me to suffer, left me—she, Albertine the remedy—as weak as a convalescent. But I reflected that she would presently be leaving Balbec for Cherbourg, and from there going to Trieste. Her old habits would be reviving. What I wished above all things was to prevent Albertine from taking the boat, to make an attempt to carry her off to Paris. It was true that from Paris, more easily even than from Balbec, she might, if she wished, go to Trieste, but at Paris we should see; perhaps I might ask Mme. de Guermantes to exert her influence indirectly upon Mlle. Vinteuil's friend so that she should not remain at Trieste, to make her accept a situation elsewhere, perhaps with

the Prince de ——, whom I had met at Mme. de Villeparisis's and, indeed, at Mme. de Guermantes's. And he, even if Albertine wished to go to his house to see her friend, might, warned by Mme. de Guermantes, prevent them from meeting. Of course I might have reminded myself that in Paris, if Albertine had those tastes, she would find many other people with whom to gratify them. But every impulse of jealousy is individual and bears the imprint of the creature—in this instance Mlle. Vinteuil's friend—who has aroused it. It was Mlle. Vinteuil's friend who remained my chief preoccupation. The mysterious passion with which I had thought in the past about Austria because it was the country from which Albertine came (her uncle had been a Counsellor of Embassy there), because its geographical peculiarities, the race that inhabited it, its historical buildings, its scenery, I could study, as in an atlas, as in an album of photographs, in Albertine's smile, her ways; this mysterious passion I still felt but, by an inversion of symbols, in the realm of horror. Yes, it was from there that Albertine came. It was there that, in every house, she could be sure of finding, if not Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, others of the sort. The habits of her childhood would revive, they would be meeting in three months' time for Christmas, then for the New Year, dates which were already painful to me in themselves, owing to an instinctive memory of the misery that I had felt on those days when, long ago, they separated me, for the whole of the Christmas holidays, from Gilberte. After the long dinner-parties, after the midnight revels, when everybody was joyous, animated, Albertine would adopt the same attitudes with her friends there that I had seen her adopt

with Andrée, albeit her friendship for Andrée was innocent, the same attitudes, possibly, that I had seen Mlle. Vinteuil adopt, pursued by her friend, at Montjouvain. To Mlle. Vinteuil, while her friend titillated her desires before subsiding upon her, I now gave the inflamed face of Albertine, of an Albertine whom I heard utter as she fled, then as she surrendered herself, her strange, deep laugh. What, in comparison with the anguish that I was now feeling, was the jealousy that I might have felt on the day when Saint-Loup had met Albertine with myself at Doncières and she had made teasing overtures to him, or that I had felt when I thought of the unknown initiator to whom I was indebted for the first kisses that she had given me in Paris, on the day when I was waiting for a letter from Mlle. de Stermaria? That other kind of jealousy provoked by Saint-Loup, by a young man of any sort, was nothing. I should have had at the most in that case to fear a rival over whom I should have attempted to prevail. But here the rival was not similar to myself, bore different weapons, I could not compete upon the same ground, give Albertine the same pleasures, nor indeed conceive what those pleasures might be. In many moments of our life, we would barter the whole of our future for a power that in itself is insignificant. I would at one time have foregone all the good things in life to make the acquaintance of Mme. Blatin, because she was a friend of Mme. Swann. To-day, in order that Albertine might not go to Trieste, I would have endured every possible torment, and if that proved insufficient, would have inflicted torments upon her, would have isolated her, kept her under lock and key, would have taken from her the little money that she had so that it

should be materially impossible for her to make the journey. Just as long ago, when I was anxious to go to Balbec, what urged me to start was the longing for a Persian church, for a stormy sea at daybreak, so what was now rending my heart as I thought that Albertine might perhaps be going to Trieste, was that she would be spending the night of Christmas there with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend: for imagination, when it changes its nature and turns to sensibility, does not for that reason acquire control of a larger number of simultaneous images. Had anyone told me that she was not at that moment either at Cherbourg or at Trieste, that there was no possibility of her seeing Albertine, how I should have wept for joy. How my whole life and its future would have been changed! And yet I knew quite well that this localisation of my jealousy was arbitrary, that if Albertine had these desires, she could gratify them with other girls. And perhaps even these very girls, if they could have seen her elsewhere, would not have tortured my heart so acutely. It was Trieste, it was that unknown world in which I could feel that Albertine took a delight, in which were her memories, her friendships, her childish loves, that exhaled that hostile, inexplicable atmosphere, like the atmosphere that used to float up to my bedroom at Combray, from the dining-room in which I could hear talking and laughing with strangers, amid the clatter of knives and forks, Mamma who would not be coming upstairs to say good-night to me; like the atmosphere that had filled for Swann the houses to which Odette went at night in search of inconceivable joys. It was no longer as of a delicious place in which the people were pensive, the sunsets golden, the church bells melancholy, that I

thought now of Trieste, but as of an accursed city which I should have liked to see go up in flames, and to eliminate from the world of real things. That city was embedded in my heart as a fixed and permanent point. The thought of letting Albertine start presently for Cherbourg and Trieste filled me with horror; as did even that of remaining at Balbec. For now that the revelation of my mistress's intimacy with Mlle. Vinteuil became almost a certainty, it seemed to me that at every moment when Albertine was not with me (and there were whole days on which, because of her aunt, I was unable to see her), she was giving herself to Bloch's sister and cousin, possibly to other girls as well. The thought that that very evening she might be seeing the Bloch girls drove me mad. And so, after she had told me that for the next few days she would stay with me all the time, I replied: "But the fact is, I want to go back to Paris. Won't you come with me? And wouldn't you like to come and stay with us for a while in Paris?" At all costs I must prevent her from being by herself, for some days at any rate, I must keep her with me, so as to be certain that she could not meet Mlle. Vinteuil's friend. She would as a matter of fact be alone in the house with myself, for my mother, taking the opportunity of a tour of inspection which my father had to make, had taken it upon herself as a duty, in obedience to my grandmother's wishes, to go down to Combray and spend a few days there with one of my grandmother's sisters. Mamma had no love for her aunt, because she had not been to my grandmother, who was so loving to her, what a sister should be. So, when they grow up, children remember with resentment the people who have been unkind to them. But Mamma,

having become my grandmother, was incapable of resentment; her mother's life was to her like a pure and innocent childhood from which she would extract those memories whose sweetness or bitterness regulated her actions towards other people. Our aunt might have been able to furnish Mamma with certain priceless details, but now she would have difficulty in obtaining them, her aunt being seriously ill (they spoke of cancer), and she reproached herself for not having gone sooner, to keep my father company, found only an additional reason for doing what her mother would have done, just as she went on the anniversary of the death of my grandmother's father, who had been such a bad parent, to lay upon his grave the flowers which my grandmother had been in the habit of taking there. And so, to the side of the grave which was about to open, my mother wished to convey the kind words which my aunt had not come to offer to my grandmother. While she was at Combray, my mother would busy herself with certain things which my grandmother had always wished to be done, but only if they were done under her daughter's supervision. So that they had never yet been begun, Mamma not wishing, by leaving Paris before my father, to make him feel too keenly the burden of a grief in which he shared, but which could not afflict him as it afflicted her. "Ah! That wouldn't be possible just at present," Albertine assured me. "Besides, why should you need to go back to Paris so soon, if the lady has gone?" "Because I shall feel more at my ease in a place where I have known her than at Balbec, which she has never seen and which I have begun to loathe." Did Albertine realise later on that this other woman had never existed, and that if that night I had

really longed for death, it was because she had stupidly revealed to me that she had been on intimate terms with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend? It is possible. There are moments when it appears to me probable. Anyhow, that morning, she believed in the existence of this other woman. "But you ought to marry this lady," she told me, "my dear boy, it would make you happy, and I'm sure it would make her happy as well." I replied that the thought that I might be making the other woman happy had almost made me decide; when, not long since, I had inherited a fortune which would enable me to provide my wife with ample luxury and pleasures, I had been on the point of accepting the sacrifice of her whom I loved. Intoxicated by the gratitude that I felt for Albertine's kindness, coming so soon after the atrocious suffering that she had caused me, just as one would think nothing of promising a fortune to the waiter who pours one out a sixth glass of brandy, I told her that my wife would have a motor-car, a yacht, that from that point of view, since Albertine was so fond of motoring and yachting, it was unfortunate that she was not the woman I loved, that I should have been the perfect husband for her, but that we should see, we should no doubt be able to meet on friendly terms. After all, as even when we are drunk we refrain from addressing the passers-by, for fear of blows, I was not guilty of the imprudence (if such it was) that I should have committed in Gilberte's time, of telling her that it was she, Albertine, whom I loved. "You see, I came very near to marrying her. But I did not dare do it, after all, I should not like to make a young woman live with anyone so sickly and troublesome as myself." "But you must be mad, any-

body would be delighted to live with you, just look how people run after you. They're always talking about you at Mme. Verdurin's, and in high society too, I'm told. She can't have been at all nice to you, that lady, to make you lose confidence in yourself like that. I can see what she is, she's a wicked woman, I detest her. I'm sure, if I were in her shoes!" "Not at all, she is very kind, far too kind. As for the Verdurins and all that, I don't care a hang. Apart from the woman I love, whom moreover I have given up, I care only for my little Albertine, she is the only person in the world who, by letting me see a great deal of her—that is, during the first few days," I added, in order not to alarm her and to be able to ask anything of her during those days, "—can bring me a little consolation." I made only a vague allusion to the possibility of marriage, adding that it was quite impracticable since we should never agree. Being, in spite of myself, still pursued in my jealousy by the memory of Saint-Loup's relations with "Rachel, when from the Lord," and of Swann's with Odette, I was too much inclined to believe that, from the moment that I was in love, I could not be loved in return, and that pecuniary interest alone could attach a woman to me. No doubt it was foolish to judge Albertine by Odette and Rachel. But it was not she; it was myself; it was the sentiments that I was capable of inspiring that my jealousy made me underestimate. And from this judgment, possibly erroneous, sprang no doubt many of the calamities that were to overwhelm us. "Then you decline my invitation to Paris?" "My aunt would not like me to leave just at present. Besides, even if I can come, later on, wouldn't it look rather odd, my staying with you like

that? In Paris everybody will know that I'm not your cousin." "Very well, then. We can say that we're practically engaged. It can't make any difference, since you know that it isn't true." Albertine's throat which emerged bodily from her nightgown, was strongly built, sunburned, of coarse grain. I kissed her as purely as if I had been kissing my mother to charm away a childish grief which as a child I did not believe that I would ever be able to eradicate from my heart. Albertine left me, in order to go and dress. Already, her devotion was beginning to falter; a moment ago she had told me that she would not leave me for a second. (And I felt sure that her resolution would not last long, since I was afraid, if we remained at Balbec, that she would that very evening, in my absence, be seeing the Bloch girls.) Now, she had just told me that she wished to call at Parville and that she would come back and see me in the afternoon. She had not looked in there the evening before, there might be letters lying there for her, besides, her aunt might be anxious about her. I had replied: "If that is all, we can send the lift-boy to tell your aunt that you are here and to call for your letters." And, anxious to shew herself obliging but annoyed at being tied down, she had wrinkled her brow, then, at once, very sweetly, said: "All right" and had sent the lift-boy. Albertine had not been out of the room a moment before the boy came and tapped gently on my door. I had not realised that, while I was talking to Albertine, he had had time to go to Parville and return. He came now to tell me that Albertine had written a note to her aunt and that she could, if I wished, come to Paris that day. It was unfortunate that she had given him this message orally, for

already, despite the early hour, the manager was about, and came to me in a great state to ask me whether there was anything wrong, whether I was really leaving; whether I could not stay just a few days longer, the wind that day being rather "tiring" (trying). I did not wish to explain to him that the one thing that mattered to me was that Albertine should have left Balbec before the hour at which the Bloch girls took the air, especially since Andrée, who alone might have protected her, was not there, and that Balbec was like one of those places in which a sick man who has difficulty in breathing is determined, should he die on the journey, not to spend another night. I should have to struggle against similar entreaties, in the hotel first of all, where the eyes of Marie Gineste and Céleste Albaret were red. (Marie, moreover, was giving vent to the swift sob of a mountain torrent. Céleste, who was gentler, urged her to keep calm; but, Marie having murmured the only poetry that she knew: "Down here the lilacs die," Céleste could contain herself no longer, and a flood of tears spilled over her lilac-hued face; I dare say they had forgotten my existence by that evening.) After which, on the little local railway, despite all my precautions against being seen, I met M. de Cambremer who, at the sight of my boxes, turned pale, for he was counting upon me for the day after the next; he infuriated me by trying to persuade me that my choking fits were caused by the change in the weather, and that October would do them all the good in the world, and asked me whether I could not "postpone my departure by a week," an expression the fatuity of which enraged me perhaps only because what he was suggesting to me made me feel ill. And while he talked

to me in the railway carriage, at each station I was afraid of seeing, more terrible than Heribald or Guiscard, M. de Crécy imploring me to invite him, or, more dreadful still, Mme. Verdurin bent upon inviting me. But this was not to happen for some hours. I had not got there yet. I had to face only the despairing entreaties of the manager. I shut the door on him, for I was afraid that, although he lowered his voice, he would end by disturbing Mamma. I remained alone in my room, that room with the too lofty ceiling in which I had been so wretched on my first arrival, in which I had thought with such longing of Mlle. de Stermaria, had watched for the appearance of Albertine and her friends, like migratory birds alighting upon the beach, in which I had enjoyed her with so little enjoyment after I had sent the lift-boy to fetch her, in which I had experienced my grandmother's kindness, then realised that she was dead; those shutters at the foot of which the morning light fell, I had opened the first time to look out upon the first ramparts of the sea (those shutters which Albertine made me close in case anybody should see us kissing). I became aware of my own transformations as I compared them with the identity of my surroundings. We grow accustomed to these as to people and when, all of a sudden, we recall the different meaning that they used to convey to us, then, after they had lost all meaning, the events very different from those of to-day which they enshrined, the diversity of actions performed beneath the same ceiling, between the same glazed bookshelves, the change in our heart and in our life that diversity implies, seem to be increased still further by the unalterable permanence of the setting, reinforced by the unity of scene.

Two or three times it occurred to me, for a moment, that the world in which this room and these bookshelves were situated and in which Albertine counted for so little, was perhaps an intellectual world, which was the sole reality, and my grief something like what we feel when we read a novel, a thing of which only a madman would make a lasting and permanent grief that prolonged itself through his life; that a tiny movement of my will would suffice, perhaps, to attain to that real world, to re-enter it, passing through my grief, as one breaks through a paper hoop, and to think no more about what Albertine had done than we think about the actions of the imaginary heroine of a novel after we have finished reading it. For that matter, the mistresses whom I have loved most passionately have never coincided with my love for them. That love was genuine, since I subordinated everything else to the need of seeing them, of keeping them to myself, and would weep aloud if, one evening, I had waited for them in vain. But it was more because they had the faculty of arousing that love, of raising it to a paroxysm, than because they were its image. When I saw them, when I heard their voices, I could find nothing in them which resembled my love and could account for it. And yet my sole joy lay in seeing them, my sole anxiety in waiting for them to come. One would have said that a virtue that had no connexion with them had been attached to them artificially by nature, and that this virtue, this quasi-electric power had the effect upon me of exciting my love, that is to say of controlling all my actions and causing all my sufferings. But from this, the beauty, or the intelligence, or the kindness of these women was entirely distinct. As by an electric current that

gives us a shock, I have been shaken by my love affairs, I have lived them, I have felt them: never have I succeeded in arriving at the stage of seeing or thinking them. Indeed I am inclined to believe that in these love affairs (I leave out of account the physical pleasure which is their habitual accompaniment but is not enough in itself to constitute them), beneath the form of the woman, it is to those invisible forces which are attached to her that we address ourselves as to obscure deities. It is they whose goodwill is necessary to us, with whom we seek to establish contact without finding any positive pleasure in it. With these goddesses, the woman, during our assignation with her, puts us in touch and does little more. We have, by way of oblation, promised jewels, travels, uttered formulas which mean that we adore and, at the same time, formulas which mean that we are indifferent. We have used all our power to obtain a fresh assignation, but on condition that no trouble is involved. Now would the woman herself, if she were not completed by these occult forces, make us give ourselves so much trouble, when, once she has left us, we are unable to say how she was dressed and realise that we never even looked at her?

As our vision is a deceiving sense, a human body, even when it is loved as Albertine's was, seems to us to be at a few yards', at a few inches' distance from us. And similarly with the soul that inhabits it. But something need only effect a violent change in the relative position of that soul to ourself, to shew us that she is in love with others and not with us, then by the beating of our dislocated heart we feel that it is not a yard away from us but within us that the beloved creature was. Within us, in regions more or less superficial. But the words:

"That friend is Mlle. Vinteuil" had been the *Open, sesame* which I should have been incapable of discovering by myself, which had made Albertine penetrate to the depths of my shattered heart. And the door that had closed behind her, I might seek for a hundred years without learning how it might be opened.

I had ceased for a moment to hear these words ringing in my ears while Albertine was with me just now. While I was kissing her, as I used to kiss my mother, at Combray, to calm my anguish, I believed almost in Albertine's innocence, or at least did not think continuously of the discovery that I had made of her vice. But now that I was alone the words began to sound afresh like those noises inside the ear which we hear as soon as the other person stops talking. Her vice now seemed to me to be beyond any doubt. The light of the approaching sunrise, by altering the appearance of the things round me, made me once again, as though it shifted my position for a moment, and even more painfully conscious of my suffering. I had never seen the dawn of so beautiful or so painful a morning. And thinking of all the nondescript scenes that were about to be lighted up, scenes which, only yesterday, would have filled me simply with the desire to visit them, I could not repress a sob when, with a gesture of oblation mechanically performed which appeared to me to symbolise the bloody sacrifice which I should have to make of all joy, every morning, until the end of my life, a solemn renewal, celebrated as each day dawned, of my daily grief and of the blood from my wound, the golden egg of the sun, as though propelled by the breach of equilibrium brought about at the moment of coagulation by a change of density, barbed with

tongues of flame as in a painting, came leaping through the curtain behind which one had felt that it was quivering with impatience, ready to appear on the scene and to spring aloft, the mysterious, ingrained purple of which it flooded with waves of light. I heard the sound of my weeping. But at that moment, to my astonishment, the door opened and, with a throbbing heart, I seemed to see my grandmother standing before me, as in one of those apparitions that had already visited me, but only in my sleep. Was all this but a dream, then? Alas, I was wide awake. "You see a likeness to your poor grandmother," said Mamma, for it was she, speaking gently to calm my fear, admitting moreover the resemblance, with a fine smile of modest pride which had always been innocent of coquetry. Her dishevelled hair, the grey locks in which were not hidden and strayed about her troubled eyes, her ageing cheeks, my grandmother's own dressing-gown which she was wearing, all these had for a moment prevented me from recognising her and had made me uncertain whether I was still asleep or my grandmother had come back to life. For a long time past my mother had resembled my grandmother, far more than the young and smiling Mamma that my childhood had known. But I had ceased to think of this resemblance. So, when we have long been sitting reading, our mind absorbed, we have not noticed how the time was passing, and suddenly we see round about us the sun that shone yesterday at the same hour call up the same harmonies, the same effects of colour that precede a sunset. It was with a smile that my mother made me aware of my mistake, for it was pleasing to her that she should bear so strong a resemblance to her mother. "I came," said my mother, "be-

cause when I was asleep I thought I heard some one crying. It wakened me. But how is it that you aren't in bed? And your eyes are filled with tears. What is the matter?" I took her head in my arms: "Mamma, listen, I'm afraid you'll think me very changeable. But first of all, yesterday I spoke to you not at all nicely about Albertine; what I said was unfair." "But what difference can that make?" said my mother, and, catching sight of the rising sun, she smiled sadly as she thought of her own mother, and, so that I might not lose the benefit of a spectacle which my grandmother used to regret that I never watched, she pointed to the window. But beyond the beach of Balbec, the sea, the sunrise, which Mamma was pointing out to me, I saw, with movements of despair which did not escape her notice, the room at Montjouvain where Albertine, rosy and round like a great cat, with her rebellious nose, had taken the place of Mlle. Vinteuil's friend and was saying amid peals of her voluptuous laughter: "Well! If they do see us, it will be all the better. I? I wouldn't dare to spit upon that old monkey?" It was this scene that I saw, beyond the scene that was framed in the open window and was no more than a dim veil drawn over the other, super-imposed upon it like a reflexion. It seemed indeed almost unreal, like a painted view. Facing us, where the cliff of Parville jutted out, the little wood in which we had played "ferret" thrust down to the sea's edge, beneath the varnish, still all golden, of the water, the picture of its foliage, as at the hour when often, at the close of day, after I had gone there to rest in the shade with Albertine, we had risen as we saw the sun sink in the sky. In the confusion of the night mists which still hung in rags of pink and

blue over the water littered with the pearly fragments of the dawn, boats were going past smiling at the slanting light which gilded their sails and the point of their bowsprits as when they are homeward bound at evening: a scene imaginary, chilling and deserted, a pure evocation of the sunset which did not rest, as at evening, upon the sequence of the hours of the day which I was accustomed to see precede it, detached, interpolated, more unsubstantial even than the horrible image of Montjouvain which it did not succeed in cancelling, covering, concealing—a poetical, vain image of memory and dreams. "But come," my mother was saying, "you said nothing unpleasant about her, you told me that she bored you a little, that you were glad you had given up the idea of marrying her. There is no reason for you to cry like that. Remember, your Mamma is going away to-day and can't bear to leave her big baby in such a state. Especially, my poor boy, as I haven't time to comfort you. Even if my things are packed, one has never any time on the morning of a journey." "It is not that." And then, calculating the future, weighing well my desires, realising that such an affection on Albertine's part for Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, and one of such long standing, could not have been innocent, that Albertine had been initiated, and, as every one of her instinctive actions made plain to me, had moreover been born with a predisposition towards that vice which in my uneasiness I had only too often dreaded, in which she could never have ceased to indulge (in which she was indulging perhaps at that moment, taking advantage of an instant in which I was not present), I said to my mother, knowing the pain that I was causing her, which she did not shew, and which re-

vealed itself only by that air of serious preoccupation which she wore when she was weighing the respective seriousness of making me unhappy or making me unwell, that air which she had assumed at Combray for the first time when she had resigned herself to spending the night in my room, that air which at this moment was extraordinarily like my grandmother's when she allowed me to drink brandy, I said to my mother: "I know how what I am going to say will distress you. First of all, instead of remaining here as you wished, I want to leave by the same train as you. But that is nothing. I am not feeling well here, I would rather go home. But listen to me, don't make yourself too miserable. This is what I want to say. I was deceiving myself, I deceived you in good faith, yesterday, I have been thinking over it all night. It is absolutely necessary, and let us decide the matter at once, because I am quite clear about it now in my own mind, because I shall not change again, and I could not live without it, it is absolutely necessary that I marry Albertine."

THE END

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

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